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THE CORN HILL MAGAZINE

AUGUST
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EDITED BY
LEONARD HUXLEY



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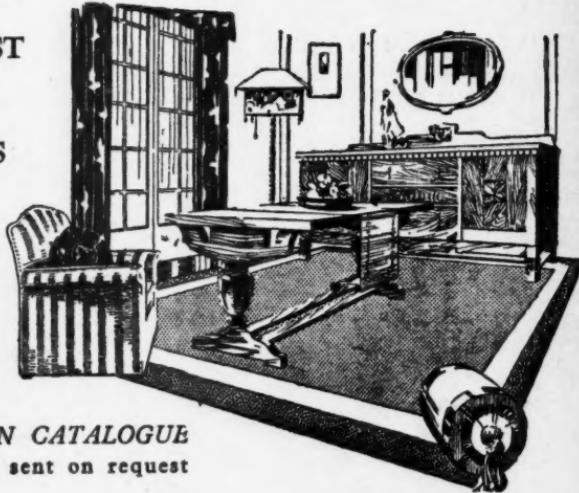
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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST 1929.

ON SOLWAY BRIDGE.

BY G. E. MITTON.

CHAPTER XXII.

AT breakfast the next morning, when Bede spoke of his intention of walking with Perdita to the school, Ina suggested he should take her little car, but he said that both he and Perdita preferred to walk, and Perdita, nodding her head very wisely, confirmed it. 'You always *do* know, Uncle Bede.'

He expected to have to begin in a roundabout way to break his news, but the child, who knew him so well, knew what he was going to tell her, and directly they were out of sight of the house, and in the quiet lanes, she pressed against him, saying in a subdued voice, 'I am very sorry, Uncle Bede.'

'What are you sorry about?'

'Because you are going to marry Miss Melikoff.'

'Hullo! Did she tell you?'

'No.'

'You didn't know it last night?'

'No.'

'How did you find out, then?'

'I saw it in her face when she said, "Run along now, your uncle has something to tell you." It peeped out of the corners of her eyes, and—and—I am so sorry.'

'That's a nice way to congratulate a young man about to be married.'

'I can't say it any other way. It's only because I love you so much, I mind so much; big as my love is, so big is my sorrow.'

'I shall take care to see a great deal of you, Perdita.'

'I don't suppose anyone ever did like it when their uncles married their governesses,' said Perdita, with a heavy sigh.

'Now I come to think of it, I don't suppose they ever did! What a profound philosopher you are, Tuppenny!' It was a name he had evolved for her, out of his constant offer of 'tuppence' for her thoughts.

'It's better to say it that way,' Perdita went on, following out her own thought, 'because then it's not impolite to any particular person.'

He did not quite know what to reply to this, and she went on—evidently having considered what she was going to say in the light of the preceding sentence—'Really why I'm sad is because I thought some day you might have me to live with you.'

'I should like that uncommonly.'

'But now it's all shut out from me.'

'Why should it be? You'll have to come and stay with us.'

'Thank you,' she said in a tone which plainly showed she had no idea of accepting such an invitation.

'Cheer up!' Bede exhorted her. 'It's not as if I were going to be hanged.'

'You are so nice and funny, you'd joke that way if you *were* going to be hanged.'

'Better than mopping one's eyes; more cheerful for the onlookers anyway. Hullo, we'd forgotten all about the beck; we'll have to go back until we strike the other road.'

Perdita dropped his arm, and rushed forward, thrilled, as all children are, by an unusual demonstration of nature's making. The rather dilapidated paling led up to the stone coping at the sides of the bridge, and some twenty feet of it was lapped by the water. Before he realised her intention, the child had sprung on the paling, and was rapidly working her way sideways to reach the stone coping of the bridge, which showed about a foot above the water.

For one instant Bede felt choked by that sick horror which a connexion of water-power with one of this family now inspired him by association of ideas. Then he leaped after her, but he was heavier, and not nearly so flexible as she, and by the time he joined her, she was standing upright on the foot-wide coping in high glee; as he came nearer she danced backwards, with her long, thin arms outspread horizontally, rippling her fingers after the manner of a Burmese girl.

'Don't do that, you'll lose your balance. Be careful, for heaven's sake!' he cried out anxiously.

Thereupon she dropped her pose, and came close up to him. 'I love to see it running along, swift and black and strong,' she chanted. 'So near to us too——' She extended a toe to the current, and Bede felt a cold perspiration breaking out all over him. It was not fear, it could not be fear, he told himself, for was

not he here? And could not he rescue her at any instant from such a stream as this, even in flood? It was something supernormal that agonised him.

The water gurgled through the round arch of the bridge below, and flowed over both sides, but so solemn and full was the flood that it made little sound.

'It's like time,' said Perdita looking at it. 'It goes on running all the time even when you're not thinking of it.'

'It would be funnier if it didn't,' said Bede, gripping her tightly.

'Yes. Suppose you said, "I won't think of time because something horrible is going to happen to me to-morrow, and so I'll stop it coming for ever so long." But of course you couldn't, because to think you wouldn't think of it, would be thinking of it all the same.'

The school-bell sounded sharp and clear, for they were not far from the village now.

'There's one sort of time anyhow,' said Bede, 'that isn't going to stop for our thinking of it.'

When he had left her at the school, he went on to the rectory, and after a conversation with the Rector, came to the conclusion that his marriage with Loosha would be put through more easily and quickly in London, where he had been living, than up here. Even with a licence there was bound to be a little delay. Hesitatingly he ventured a request. The situation at the house, he explained, was a little difficult, for since Loosha was going to marry him she naturally ceased to be the children's governess; they all thought therefore that if she could be put up somewhere as a paying guest for the next two weeks, until everything was in train for the marriage, it would be more comfortable for both her and Mrs. Delaval.

The Rector immediately summoned his wife, who said there was no difficulty whatever. Being a woman, she of course knew exactly what had happened, and understood the inner meaning of the request. Mingled with her profound pity and slight contempt for Bede, at having been so foolishly caught, was a real sympathy with the Delavals, and a flavour of excitement at the idea of taking some part in a 'drama of real life.'

At first she said that Loosha must come as a guest, without the initial word, but when she found that on no consideration but on paying for her board would she be allowed to come, she gave way.

Bede explained that he could not quite say whether she would

arrive that night or the next, but he would telephone definitely later on in the day.

He now had his scheme all cut and dried, and propounded it to Ina on his return. Loosha should stay at the rectory at his expense, until he sent for her to join him in London, and he himself, that evening, after having taken her to these good people, would go up to London by the night express.

'Have you asked Loosha what she thinks of this idea?' Ina asked.

'No, but I am sure she will agree to anything I think best.'

'I daresay she will—at present.'

There proved to be no difficulty with Loosha, who only stipulated that she should not start for the rectory until Bede was himself on the way to the station, when he could drop her there in passing. In reality she hated the idea of his being left alone at Dalness with his sister-in-law even for an hour.

The only point now in doubt was whether Cuthbert would return home before the couple who had caused all this upset had left. Bede, who did not, of course, know that he had been forbidden the house, felt that he must stay as long as possible on the chance of facing his brother, who would be furious at the sight of him and Loosha as an engaged couple.

The day had been wild, though not very wet, but by four o'clock the rain began to stream down again, and as darkness blotted out the lawn, strewn with twigs and leaves, the howl of the wind seemed to become more insistent.

Ina, usually so equable, had shown herself restless over Cuthbert's non-arrival. She had first imagined that he might appear in time for lunch, then she had expected some telephone message about his being back for tea; but when tea-time came and there was neither man nor message, she grew more and more uneasy.

It was while they were actually at tea the telephone bell rang at last, and she went herself to answer it. When she heard it was Cuthbert speaking she was quieted at once. She had left the drawing-room door open, and the others could hear her end of the conversation.

'No, not well.'

'What is it?'

'Oh, Cuthbert—'

'Yes, I have been anxious.'

'I'm glad of that.'

'Bickley Pit ?'

'Really ?'

'Must you stay ?'

'I can't hear a word you say. It's not dangerous, is it ?'

'Oh, Cuthbert, don't——'

She stopped. 'They've rung me off,' she said, returning white-faced to the two in the drawing-room, 'and it's rather alarming, something about the water breaking through from the old workings into Bickley Pit. That's quite near the canal, you know.'

'Canal ?' asked Bede, sharply. 'What canal ?'

She looked at him steadily, and continued calmly, 'Cuthbert has a scheme about a canal which he keeps very quiet. I will tell you this much. It is near Bickley Pit and is to join an existing canal to the Tyne. He expects to get great way-leaves, and has formed a company to build it. It is well under way now, but far from completion. I think that's all.'

Bede sat absolutely silent. This threw light on much that had puzzled him : his brother's absence in Newcastle on such frequent and mysterious 'business'; a certain triumph which had appeared in his manner last summer, and an increase of consequential self-esteem.

'Bickley ?' he repeated. 'I remember my father always thought that piece of land a potential gold-mine, the sort of gold you get from a coal pit. He lived in a perpetual state of being disappointed about it, but though I knew, after a while, that no good thing was coming out of Bickley, I always held it in awe, as something mysteriously valuable in association with floating companies.'

'The pit really belongs to Mrs. Hall,' said Ina, 'and Harry works it for her.'

'Old Mr. Hall took me down once,' Bede remarked, 'just before I went to Oxford. Pits had a fascination for me then; I thought of going in for a career as a mining engineer.'

'Cuthbert has nothing to do with Bickley,' said Ina. 'I can't think why he stays to bother about it.'

In the meantime, Loosha, who was now quite at home, had gone across to the wireless and set it going. It was seldom they used it, much preferring her direct piano playing, but as it happened it was the time for news, and as they were 'on' to the Newcastle 'station' it was sometimes local. Ina and Bede, who had risen and were standing, heard the deliberate, careful voice of the speaker saying :

'A bad accident to the Bickley Pit. Water has burst in from the old workings. It is feared more than a hundred men are imprisoned.'

They both turned rigid and met each other's eyes.

'I am going,' said Ina, quietly determined. 'I understand now. Cuthbert is staying there to help; he has volunteered to be one of the rescue party. He did not say so. I understood him to say he was "standing by," but I know him. He *would* go, of course. I cannot stay here and do nothing. I shall have to leave you, and take the little car, and go there too to "stand by." ' She ended up with a little laugh that sounded strained and hideous, like a wail.

'Are you sure you would not be better here?' Bede asked.

'We can stay with you, Loosha and I. It only means telephoning to the Makowers to explain, and to the inn to put off the car that is coming to fetch us.'

She walked straight up to him, put one hand flat on his chest, and said in a low, but perfectly audible, voice, 'I could not bear it.'

Loosha had hastily shut off the wireless, directly the loud speaker began on other topics, and now came up to them. 'What about me?' she asked.

'Very well, Ina,' Bede agreed. 'You shall do as you like, but of course I drive you to Bickley. I will take Loosha to the rectory first, and come back at once.'

A thundercloud gathered on Loosha's face. She ignored Mrs. Delaval, and spoke to her fiancé. 'Do you mean to say you are also going to this place called Bickley? '

'Yes, I am going.'

'Then I go too.'

'That is impossible; the little car only holds two with the hood up; besides, you could do no good.' He schooled himself to answer her explanatorily, but in truth she was at that moment of no account whatever. It was as if he and Ina and Cuthbert were planets spinning in one system, and this girl an excrescence, a small meteorite, which had lighted on one of them as an extraneous bit of matter, irritating, but of no real consequence to any of them.

Loosha was very obstinate. 'Then I forbid *you* to go,' she said.

'That is nonsense,' Bede answered patiently. 'Go upstairs and put on your things. I will telephone for the inn car, and

when it comes I will drive with you to the rectory. You won't start until I come back, Ina ?'

She made a movement to signify she would not, and left the room.

Then Loosha broke out in a storm of fury.

'It is her you love, you wicked man,' she screamed. 'You are loving your brother's wife, which is a thing forbidden in the Bible.'

'Stop,' said Bede, sharply and authoritatively, in a tone she had never heard him use before.

He took her arm and led her to the sofa, where he sat down beside her.

'You must never say such things, or think such thoughts,' he went on commandingly. 'I have told you that I love you, and that we shall be married as soon as I can arrange it. With that you must be content.'

But she was not. She broke out in a vehement tirade, with floods of words, in German, French, Polish and English. Most of them he did not understand, but he put his hands over his face, and sat enduring it until she stopped. Then he said again, quite gently, but with a cold, petrifying tone in his voice : 'That's enough. Now go and put on your things, whilst I telephone for the inn car to come at once.'

She turned upon him, as if she would have smacked his face, but something in his expression shocked her ; he was so very white, so drawn and set. She caught her breath, and checked herself. Then, without another word, she got up and crossed the room. Bede sprang to his feet and opened the door for her ; he saw her go upstairs and went himself to the telephone.

When he turned from it, he found Ina on the stairs, leaning over to speak to him.

'I can't get on to Cuthbert,' she said huskily. 'I do not know any number to try for ; if I tried for Bickley Pit, of course it wouldn't do, there will be streams of messages going over the wires.'

'No. But we shall get there in no very long time. I suppose it's somewhere from thirty-five to forty miles ? Have you plenty of petrol ?'

She laid a hand on his shoulder. 'I think so, but Gibson is with Cuthbert, and the gardener sleeps in the village. Could you see to it, Bede ?'

Perdita and Podge appeared at the top of the stairs. Ina went toward them and kneeled on the step below. 'Darlings,' she said,

gathering them both into her arms, 'I have had a message on the telephone from father that there has been an accident at Bickley Pit, water has come into the workings, and he is standing by to see if he can be of any use. You know that I went through all the first aid business, and I am going to see if I can't stand by too, and help if anyone is hurt.'

'Can't I come too, mother?' asked Perdita, imploringly, with that gesture with her two thin hands twisted together that was so peculiarly beseeching.

'But of course you can't,' answered Ina, with a laugh so natural that Bede marvelled at her self-command. 'It's pouring like anything, and you know the hood just shelters two. Should I put my infants in the dickey, exposed to "the fury of the blast," as you would say, you chickens?'

At this moment Loosha came out of her room, with her black fur around her neck. Without a sign of recognition to the children she passed, merely thrusting them aside, and went on downstairs with her head held high.

'Is she going too?' Perdita asked, with almost a cry.

'No, no, she is going to stay at the rectory with the Makowers.'

Ina glanced down as she spoke, and saw that Bede had vanished, probably to the yard to get the car ready.

Before he returned, the inn car was wheezing at the door, with old Bamlett the driver, who looked more like a cattle-drover than a chauffeur, in attendance.

'Where is Loosha?' Bede asked, as Annie and the housemaid carried out Loosha's box in obedience to Ina's orders.

'I don't know, she came downstairs just now.'

He went into the drawing-room, and found the girl he was so shortly to marry, sitting bolt upright on the sofa, rigid and impassive as an idol.

'The car is here,' he said shortly, incensed against her.

She rose, and came toward him, still with the same absurd affectation of being an automaton. He held the door for her. She passed out and through the hall, and to the car, without a glance at the wondering children or Ina. Bede followed her in. 'I shall come back at once,' he said to Ina. The door shut and they were off.

Then Loosha's arms were round his neck, her furs suffocated him, her tears, raining down, smeared his face; she wailed and sobbed. 'You do not love me any more, you do not love me one

little bit. All your heart is for that woman, and you are so stern and cold.'

A furious revolt rose within him. Even in his first marriage he had never suffered from the odious contact of forcible possession by a woman ; he was nauseated, and at the moment he absolutely loathed her.

However he answered nothing, and did not struggle to release himself ; simply enduring what was to him horrible, until she let him go. Then keeping command of himself he laid his hand on hers, and spoke as kindly as he could. ' My dear girl, you entirely misunderstand the matter. You are overwrought and excited. Cannot you understand that my only brother is in a position of extreme danger ? That it is natural his wife should wish to be beside him, to hear what happens at the earliest moment, to give all the help in her power ? '

As there was no response, he went on : ' All of us have been brought up in a pit country. We know that cry for help from anyone and everyone within reach, and it is one of the first things we learn, that when and if it comes, we must go.'

' She can go alone ; she can drive the car.'

' You would have her go on this streaming night, miles and miles through the darkness, full of anxiety for her husband ? '

' I would not mind.'

' Loosha, if you want me to go on loving you, you must not show me such a hard heart.'

Unconsciously his tone had changed, as if he spoke to a child ; he had instinctively realised that nothing more than what might be expected from a spoilt child could come to him from this girl —woman in years—who was to be his life's companion.

The tone touched her ; she cried softly, ' I have not a hard heart ; it is you that have the hard heart, sending me away alone among Makowers. I hate Makowers.'

' There, there, it is not for long. I will come over directly we get back in the morning to tell you what has happened, then I will go to London, and within ten days or so we shall be married.'

This had to suffice her, and it did calm her in some degree, so that she arrived at the Makowers' in a slightly more gracious mood.

There he left her, and returned to Ina, finding she had already brought the car round to the door. She had put in it such things as she thought might be needed, and then for one moment she turned from him, and took first Podge and then Perdita into her arms.

The lantern which had been fitted with an electric bulb shed a light on the porch and steps, and the light fell full on that tall, motherly figure with the children. As she held Podge closely, Podge kissed her fat fingers over her shoulder to Bede, but Perdita clung with insistence and a very distressed face to her mother's arm.

She was very undemonstrative to anyone but Bede, yet this time she put both thin arms round Ina's neck as she stooped, and Bede heard her say distinctly, '*I do really love you, mother.*' Strange sentence for a child !

Then they were off.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DIRECTLY Ina and Bede started, shut together in a little box of a car, with only the lights gleaming on the wet road to remind them they had any connexion with the earth, the rest of the world dropped away from them. Loosha fell out of Bede's mind as completely as she would have vanished from his sight if she had fallen through a trap into space. She had never touched more than the superficies of him, and her hold was slight.

The obsession of the vision had come back on him in full force as he had not felt it for many months. The inexpressible menace of masses of water in movement was upon him. In vain he argued with himself that this time the water was moving underground, fathoms beneath the surface, and as Ina, being a woman, would certainly not be permitted to go below, even in this year of woman's liberty, she could not be in any danger from it. It was like trying to mend the ache of a broken bone by dabbing ointment on the external skin. The ache and the disquiet lay far too deep to be allayed by such surface arguments.

'I was afraid at first that there might be something wrong with the canal,' said Ina when they had run for some twenty minutes or so in silence. 'I could not hear what Cuthbert said on the telephone very well, but I am sure it had nothing to do with the canal.'

'What could go wrong with the canal?'

'There is a big drop from the existing canal, and they are to have three locks; when it comes to letting the water through for the first time—'

'But they have not got nearly so far as that, surely?'

'No,' she answered, and said no more on the subject, out of loyalty to her husband, who had not discussed it with his brother.

They had both of them had some experience of pit-accidents, and Ina presently began speaking of one she had witnessed many years ago, when she was a girl at home with her father. She had been awakened by a strange rumbling boom which shook the house, and she thought it was an earthquake; then shortly after the buzzer of a colliery about five miles from the vicarage began sounding insistently, and her father, very lightly clad, came in and said he feared there must have been an explosion at the Lower Main Pit, and he was going there.

Of course she went with him, driving him in the grey light of morning in the little pony-cart, which was all the conveyance they had. Long before they reached the actual pit they knew their fears confirmed, by the multitude of people, half-dressed, and crying, who were strown along the roads, all hastening in one direction, panting and hurrying, with fear in their eyes and movements. She remembered the weary waiting for hours at the pit-head, when the women, wild-eyed, seemed hardly to hear what was said to them, and the heartrending scenes that followed when some bodies had been brought up, lying inert and helpless on improvised stretchers, covered with whatever came handy.

Yet there had not been a great loss of life, as the explosion took place at night. The loss that impressed her most was that of two of the gallant rescuers, who had been overcome by the dreaded black-damp or after-damp, and could not be resuscitated.

'Surely there cannot be any danger of after-damp if it is only water that has got into the pit?' she asked anxiously at last.

Bede said he did not know, and they relapsed into silence.

Once he had to stop, as the engine was not running properly, and he found it overheated, and had to wait to cool it down. Then Ina produced some sandwiches, and made him share them. They had come off soon after seven, and so great was their anxiety that the thought of dinner had never crossed their minds.

They could not run fast because of the darkness, and the fear of missing the turns; they did miss one, and had to reverse back up to it; at other times they had to slow down to read the sign-posts. The road, though they both knew it, was not really familiar to them, and everything looked so different by night. The rain first beat in on the east side so that Ina had had to make a sort of pad on her shoulder, for the screens did not fit perfectly, but it soon ceased, and except for the heavy dripping from the thick branched trees it was not wet.

They met very little traffic, even when at last, some time after nine, they passed between rows of houses, showing the proximity of Bickley. The place seemed deserted rather than otherwise, and there was no traffic in the streets, but as they neared the colliery they had to go more slowly, for they found that people were streaming about, not only on the pavements but along the road. Then they had to pull up, long before they reached the actual scene of the disaster, for a policeman authoritatively waved them off into a side-street, and told them they could take the car no farther.

Bede shut off the petrol, locked the engine, and took up the two heavy baskets, which Ina extracted from the back, and they worked onward through the murmuring people into a throng that grew ever denser and less penetrable.

At length they encountered a cordon of police, who stopped even those on foot from farther progress, and held their own impassively against stubborn thrusting. But the production of cards and some argument opened the way even here, and the newcomers were allowed through, to the disgust of those who wanted to see all that could be seen, though they had no business at the pit.

Audible and satiric comments accompanied them as they went between the policemen

'Toffs, Geordie, that's what they is. Oh my, look at 'em, they walks in like the Prince of Wales hisself !'

'You haud on there. Thou'st na reet to gan in when oursen' is keepit oot. Shame on yer and yer loike !'

'Dom ther ! Ef such as them is let in, a'll be in and a'.'

'I doot tha'll get theesen in trouble ower this.'

And so on, but they were soon beyond such voices, and in the midst of a silent crowd of men and women, silent with the immense strain of waiting for those they loved who were in danger.

A huge flare of a thousand candle-power hung high, and showered down blinding light on the gaunt pit out-buildings and the white upturned faces, as if it had been a display of fireworks, only that here was no colour. The sheets of falling light seemed to be tangible slices, without any quality of softening at the edges ; they fell hard and clear cut, and made of the corners into which they did not reach the semblance of black monsters ready to pounce.

Bede, who knew the place, explained to Ina that there were two shafts or ' pits ' belonging to the one company ; this, the Bickley, was the main shaft, but there was another more than a mile away called the ' Lucy,' which led into some of the same workings. He

guided her over tramlines, and between various obstacles, until he brought her to an office building, in the lee of the engine-house. Just as they reached it a man stepped out, and though he was in pit clothes they recognised him as Alfred Hall, the younger brother of the manager.

'Mrs. Delaval!' he exclaimed in surprise. 'Yes, your husband is here. Come in.'

He stepped aside, and Ina, expecting to see Cuthbert, went in eagerly. The room was small and stuffy, and packed with men poring over plans under a high light. Most of them looked dirty and very tired; their faces were haggard with anxiety. Bede recognised some of them, the managers, viewers, and overmen of neighbouring collieries. But Cuthbert was not among them. Ina sank into a wooden chair that one of them had thrust forward at the sight of her, and Bede put down the heavy baskets by the door.

'He is not here,' said Ina, with a wonderfully composed manner.

'Not at the moment,' said Alfred Hall. 'He should be here soon. They have been coming and going. He is with one of the rescue parties expected at the surface any moment. When they come up, I am going down.'

Ina spoke, still in that calm, detached way she seemed to have put on for the occasion. 'I have brought everything I could imagine would be useful. Brandy and hot bottles and soup tablets and dressings.'

'It is very thoughtful of you; no doubt they will all come in useful. I shall have to go now, but if you wouldn't mind sitting here I will see that news is sent to you from time to time, and let your husband know where you are directly he comes up.'

Ina looked at Bede imploringly. She wanted to be in it too, to go to the shaft, to hear the latest news. But he bent over her and said earnestly: 'You can't; it's as much as we can expect that they should let you sit here. Wait quietly, and I will go with Alfred Hall and discover what is being done.'

She nodded assent, and resigned herself to the strained waiting with an unknown end.

As the other two got outside, Bede asked what had happened exactly.

'It's a most extraordinary case,' Alfred answered. 'There are old workings lying to the north of us, closed down over fifty years ago. Of course we knew of them, but as we were not even within the prescribed forty yards of their boundary, we never

considered the possibility of water coming through from there. Yet that is what must have happened. Two men working in that direction this morning bored holes and the overman put in and fired a shot to bring down what is called a "jud," an outstanding lump of coal projecting from the face ; when it was done a trickle of water came through, and the overman, Surtees, smelt it, and found it was foul, which alarmed him a little. He is an experienced man. He got the hewers out of the place, and was following himself, to report upon it to the chief viewer or the under-manager, when there was a bang, and a length of the face fell in, and water poured through. He and the others got out by using a pony hauling tubs to pull them along, and then Surtees went to warn others working at the face in other parts. But the water did not seem to rise very fast. That was at midday.'

' How many men were down that shift ? '

' Something over a hundred, but some of them were working close to the main shaft, and others in the seam above ; they were brought out at once. When the manager himself went down, with all precautions against choke-damp, to look for the rest, and find out what had happened, they discovered that a low place that runs across the main roadways, called a "swilly," was full up to the roof, and there was no way of getting through it.

' It is feared that the men working up at the bord flats to the westward of it may have succumbed to the foul air ; but they might be got at from the Lucy Pit.'

' Is there a connexion ? '

' It is all in connexion in a way. As it happens the seam where the water broke through is the lowest of all, called Blackgang seam, and it is common to both.'

' But the Lucy Pit is a mile away, over there ? '

' That's so. I must get there now.'

' You'll let me go down with you ? '

' It doesn't rest with me, but if you like to put on an overall suit from the store there, and follow up, you might have a chance.'

Bede did so, and hurried after him along the cinder track to the other shaft, clearly visible, and also surrounded by a crowd of anxious watchers. Just as he pushed his way to the mouth of the shaft, the cage reached ground level, and one by one, with bent shoulders, their red mouths showing out of their grimed wet faces, a file of men emerged.

The first, hardly recognisable in his pit garb, was Harry Hall.

Bede watched for his brother, but could not be sure he recognised him, for the high lights above cast a black shadow below the thick leather, peaked headgear the men wore, and the clumsy pit clothes concealed their figures.

After a minute's consultation among themselves, one of them took up a megaphone, which had been placed there for the purpose, and proclaimed :

'Cheer up. They're there as right as rain. We've heard tapping, and we'll get at them, you may depend on't.'

A faint and wavering cheer, pathetic in its mingled hope and scepticism, greeted this announcement, and while the news ran fluently in and out of the scattered groups, and found its way to the other shaft, faint cheers accompanied it, breaking out here and there.

Bede had, by this time, got up against Alfred again.

'I suppose my brother was among that lot, but I couldn't make him out ?'

'He's down there still ; his party went later than this one, and they are trying to break through. Can you handle a pick ?'

'Yes,' said Bede, untruthfully.

Some time elapsed before the preparations for the descent of the next party were completed, and meantime Bede asked for more information as to the catastrophe. Alfred spoke in a low voice, not to be overheard.

'Of course I'm in it,' he said, 'because I'm their consulting engineer. I'm afraid there's no doubt it's the water which has accumulated in the old workings of the Primrose Pit, abandoned fifty years ago. You can't well understand without a plan, but perhaps you know enough of it as it is above ground to judge. There's a boundary line of the royalty owners that runs east and west to the north of us, and to the east end of this lies the old Primrose, which actually worked the same seam that the accident has happened to—the Blackgang. On the north side of the boundary line also, but to the west, up against the Primrose on that side, is Heywards' pit. Heslop, their manager, came over this afternoon, bringing with him a plan they have of the extension of this very seam. They had it made when they started working there, which was ten years later than us. In this plan the workings are shown right up to the boundary line, and not beyond ; they are of the same bord and pillar type we use, and what is very remarkable it shows them to be cut diagonally across by the boundary line. Now that's

impossible, because no one would make workings like that. The effect is that of a line drawn diagonally across a pavement, cutting the slabs in two parts. It's quite obvious that the old workings ran over the boundary.'

'So you think you've struck into them?'

'It looks devilish like it. We had no notion they were on this side at all, and we were well outside the forty yards limit laid down by the Act.'

At that moment some men began to enter the cage.

'Come on,' Alfred continued, 'keep close to me, and hold your head down; possibly no one will object.'

Just as they passed into the waiting cage, however, their names were taken, and when Bede, who was the last, came to the man in charge he was told bluffly to 'get out of it.'

'He's a brother of Mr. Delaval's, and a friend of the manager's,' said Alfred, stoutly.

The man grunted, but marked the name and let him pass, so with their backs bent to fit the low cage they ground down out of sight. They were packed tightly, ten of them, facing, five a side; overhead ran an iron bar that anyone could catch hold of if he wished, but most of them scorned to do so. Around them, from the clothes they wore, emanated a thick atmosphere of that penetrating odour of 'pittishness' compounded of sweat and tar and coal-dust, so pungent that it might almost act as a restorative, and so clinging that no clothes once subjected to it ever get quite free from it.

The cage moved so smoothly that in the darkness it was impossible to judge in what direction it was travelling; it seemed to sway this way and that horizontally, instead of travelling straight down a steel-built tube that exactly fitted it. It seemed to float endlessly, but at length drew up gently in a draughty place where lights moved to and fro.

The lights gleamed on sandstone walls, blackened by dirt, on shelves and edges and angles of coal, on the wide space trodden by many feet, and on the brightly lit doorway of the overman's room, hewn from the 'face' itself, where a hacked table was covered with miners' safety lamps, cages with birds in them, and hard leatheren head-gear, in shape like sou'-westers. In the corner stood a mass of picks. Here they were each equipped with a lamp, fixed to a 'bonnet,' and a pick, and started off in single file, following the lead of an overman, who, luckily for them, belonged to this pit and

knew it, and was not one of the innumerable volunteers from neighbouring pits, who had heroically streamed in at the first intimation of danger, to honour the time-old tradition.

At first the way was fairly wide, with a couple of tramlines running on different levels side by side. It was awkward going, but fairly smooth underfoot. Then they passed through a swing door which fell shut behind them, and at once they were in another world. All that world of high lights, and gaunt scaffolding, and black crouching monsters, the world of space and action, was cut off, and they were in a narrow, draughty place with infinite extension, but no other dimensions to speak of. They walked and walked, stooping a little, stumbling now and again, and the cold sweat crept out on at least one member of the party, who was unused to such work, and had an imagination of the vivid sort, and highly geared nerves.

How long they walked, and turned, and stopped and waited, it was impossible to estimate; to some it seemed they had been doing it for hours, and the trouble was, during the short halts, to conceal the heavy breathing which betrayed distress at the unusual cramped positions.

At length, however, they got out into wide disused spaces, reached by crawling a quarter of a mile or so, through a long irregular tunnel, where the jagged roof scraped their backs from time to time. The going, in this waste or 'gob,' was in some ways easier, but in some harder. There was more height and expansion, but the huge blocks which had fallen were scattered over the ground; the worn and tumbling props and other impediments made traps for the unwary. The danger was obvious, as it was manifest no renewal had been made recently, and that at any moment some of the roof might cave in.

Here the overman called a halt, and sounded a sort of horn he had brought with him, to locate the earlier party. It was a weird scene. He had squatted on his hunkers, with the hooter in one hand, making melancholy blasts re-echo through the dismal, draughty, black corridors, and beside him on the ground pecked and chirped a small bird in a cage, apparently so indifferent to its surroundings that it saw nothing wrong and feared nothing. So long as it pecked and chirped, the men knew that at least they would not be cheated by the atmosphere to an insidious death.

From far away at length faint noises were heard, which resolved themselves into the scraping, sidling walk that men's feet make in

these strange ways, and presently gleaming faces were seen beneath glowworm lamps.

Two men came up, one being an overman, and he expressed satisfaction. ‘We’re as near them as can be,’ he said, ‘not more than twa’-three yards maybe, of the solid rock. We’re nigh the water too, but it’s bone dry where we’re working. Stir yerselves and we’ll get them oot.’

They all followed him where he led.

Presently they came into more open spaces, where the low roof was supported by pillars. The ringing sound of iron picks on stone and coal could be soon heard, and grew sharper and more insistent as they neared the place where the rest of this earlier party were stationed. When they came out into the space near by, they saw some of them squatted around, waiting for their turn. The two who were working were in a sort of cave or depression in the coal face, where it was obviously the easiest to break through, and where only two could work at a time, swinging alternately, and not without some danger to each other had they been less skilled. They were stripped to the waist, above their stained coarse flannel shorts; the sweat pouring down their faces was now and again hastily thrown off by an impatient movement of the head, or swung away with the back of a hand, so that it smudged across their grimed cheeks. The débris which they brought down was shovelled away by others to some distance as it fell.

‘Haud on,’ said the overman, and they thankfully paused, breathing hard. ‘Hark you now.’ He struck the rock a little farther down in a peculiar way, and immediately, faint and far off, but quite distinctly, and obviously with intention, came some tapping in response.

Then the intensive work was resumed, a fresh couple taking the place of the first.

Bede was wondering what sort of a figure he should cut when his turn came, and was already anticipating the overman’s caustic comment: ‘Get thee ahint, thoo’s not a mort of use,’ when the man squatting next to him turned toward him, and by the light of the lamps they carried on their foreheads each saw the other’s face.

‘Hullo! The Young ’un!’

Cuthbert it was who spoke, and he, taken off his guard, forgot the bitter years between, and cried out the name used in the careless affection of boyhood. It sent an exhilarating tingle of joyous

surprise to Bede's heart. Never had he expected to hear that name again. His smile was sufficient answer.

'How in the world do you come to be here?' Cuthbert asked.

He had forgotten all about Loosha, forgotten that cold calculating world above, for the unusual tensity of the drama in which he was taking part had for the moment absorbed him, and aroused in him what feeling he possessed.

'Ina was upset at getting your message on the telephone, and insisted on coming over here. Naturally I brought her.'

'But how did you happen to be on the spot so opportunely?'

Bede knew instinctively that Loosha was forgotten, that to mention her would be to quench even this faint survival of brotherly feeling, but the loyalty that was in him made him say without perceptible hesitation, 'Loosha sent me a wire.'

He watched his brother's face as he spoke, anticipating the shadow that would eclipse its brief light, and it came like a veil drawn down. Cuthbert turned away.

They never spoke to each other again.

(*To be continued.*)

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COURT OF GEORGE III.

BY DORMER CRESTON.

WHEN I was a child I used to be told anecdotes of my great-great-grandmother, Lady George Murray, and the court of George III, where she held the post of a lady-in-waiting. These stories, trickling down through the nurseries of several generations, had become rather blurred, but tradition had it that they were all to be found in a small book written by one of Lady George's daughters, Amelia Murray (in her turn maid-of-honour to Queen Victoria), the legendary Aunt Amelia who, like some slow-dying ghost, still floated in the atmosphere of my childhood. This book¹ has lately come into my hands, and though the incidents it relates are slight, they yet possess that interest which always attaches to authentic happenings and, therefore, seem worth recording once more.

Lady George (who was a Miss Ann Grant) had married when she was only fifteen ; her husband, the second son of the Duke of Athole (as the name was then spelt), being eighteen. They had only been allowed to marry on condition that Lord George should matriculate at Oxford after his marriage, while the Duchess took charge of his wife.

Judging from a story we are given about the Duchess one imagines that the fifteen-year-old bride must have led a rather compressed existence with her mother-in-law. On one occasion, when the Duchess had another of her daughters-in-law staying with her, though very strict in her observance of Sunday, she so far stretched her conscience as to accept for them both an invitation for a party on Sunday evening ' upon condition that there should be no card-playing on that night.' The evening arrived, but, as the two ladies entered their hostess's drawing-room, the first sight to meet the Duchess's eye was a ' card-table in full operation. Calling on Lady Charles to follow her, she exclaimed, " I will not stay another minute in this house." '

But these dramatic gestures have to be paid for. When they reached the hall they realised that as their carriage had been dismissed they would have to walk home, and ' the unwonted

¹ *Recollections of the Early Years of the Present Century*, by the Hon. Amelia Murray, which was published by Longmans, Green & Co. in 1868.

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appearance on the pavement of two ladies magnificently dressed in the very peculiar costume worn by the higher classes of that time attracted a crowd around them.' However, fortunately, a friend who happened to drive by offered them his carriage, and the two distracted ladies were driven to their home.

Lord George was made Bishop of St. David's in 1800, but, barely three years later, Lady George found herself left a widow with not only ten children to look after, but with very little on which to do it. She at once had all her hair shaved off and took to a wig. According to the 'Recollections,' 'widows almost always shaved their heads.' As regards her pecuniary difficulties, William Pitt, to a certain extent, eased the situation by giving her a pension.

'Mr. Pitt granted a pension of £300 a year to my mother, and to each of her daughters, £70, as long as they continued unmarried. This was given in consideration that Lord George had saved the country much expenditure by his invention and organisation of the first attempt at telegraphic communication—a contrivance which was in use during a long period of war : it was carried on by means of a series of shuttles. I just remember seeing one of those telegraphs on the roof of the Admiralty ; it sent messages through others on corresponding heights, and by this means notice was given to the different ports, which enabled the fleets to unite ; and a great naval victory was gained in consequence.'

We are left in ignorance as to which naval battle is referred to, but the probability seems to be that it was that of Camperdown, 1797.

'In 1805 sea-air was advised for my mother ; and as the King was not expected to visit Weymouth that summer, and lodgings were therefore reasonable, a house was taken for us on the Esplanade ; but we had hardly settled there when the King changed his mind, and that change influenced the fortunes of my mother's numerous family ; for the good King and Queen became deeply interested in their fate.' They tried to cheer Lady George by taking her on the royal yacht, the Murray children were 'loaded with presents and treated with every kindness.'

Through the eyes of my Aunt Amelia we can look back and see the sun of a century ago shining down on cheerful Weymouth, on 'beautiful girls and charming children thronging the Esplanade ; the King, Queen, and royal family walking about among their subjects,' 'two royal yachts and three frigates in the bay ; . . . Hanoverian cavalry careering on the sands, and singing their fine

musical choruses as they passed along the road,' while 'an infantry regiment with its lively band' spurted its music into the sunshine. 'It was in truth a children's paradise, for George III and his Queen loved children.' This happy little community was made to feel secure by 'a picturesque camp of sharpshooters on the "Look-out,"' presumably for Buonaparte. The overflow of royal servants were lodged near Lady George's house, and one day the amused children saw in the yard next door the 'royal cooks tossing pancakes.'

'It was the custom then for all visitors who desired to pay their respects, or to be noticed, to form a lane for the Royal family to walk through, on their way to embark in their barge. Many families came from a distance for this purpose, or for the sake of seeing the King. On one occasion the Queen had sent me a smart frock, and I was taken down to the pier to thank her. She said, "I hope you liked it, my dear."

"Oh yes, ma'am; it was the first of my own I ever had."

'Surprise being expressed, my mother explained that, being the youngest of several daughters I succeeded to the frocks that my elder sisters had outgrown.'

"Poor dear!" exclaimed Queen Charlotte; "she shall have another frock."

Amelia Murray remembers the King taking her on his knee and urging her 'always to wear a pocket, for George III was shocked by the scanty dresses then in fashion, which made it out of the question for ladies to wear pockets.'

At times King George's affection for the children would reach a culminating point, and when this happened he would 'command a play at the small theatre, engage the whole dress circle, and send round for all the young ones to fill it.' Then he would attend the play himself, beaming at the children's excitement. Here, most lamentably, my Aunt Amelia turns aside to discuss whether such 'dissipation' was 'detrimental' to the children. One cannot, in such a thin slice of a book—a mere ninety pages of large print—but grudge the room given up to these and similar moral acrostics. But though one may deplore one has to submit, and we must return to the narrative.

Now the scene changes to Windsor Castle, for Lady George had been appointed Lady-in-waiting to the King's two eldest unmarried daughters, the Princesses Augusta and Elizabeth. Amelia Murray, still a child herself, and her small brothers and sisters, used to spend much of their time in Lady George's rooms in the Castle. Princess

Amelia, 'young and pretty,' would come drifting in to join in anything that was on foot. 'We peeled walnuts, and put them into a glass of strong salt and water, and she liked to pick them out.' Christmas trees were almost unknown in England at this time, but when Christmas came round all the children would be called into the room of Madame Berkendorff, the Queen's German attendant, where they would see this mysterious, candle-lit tree hung with presents for them, each with its label attached. Sometimes a page would arrive at the door of Lady George's room to say that 'if Lady George was at home the Queen would come down for a little while,' and then my Aunt Amelia would sit upon a stool at the Queen's feet, while she would tell them anecdotes of her early years.

"The English people did not like me much, because I was not pretty, but the King was fond of driving a phaeton in those days, and once he overturned me in a turnip-field, and that fall broke my nose. I think I was not quite so ugly after dat."

"Lady Henderland was one of my ladies. She was left to sit with me in the evening, when the King went to business at nine o'clock. I sat, and the good lady sat, and we both got very tired. At last Lady Henderland said, 'Perhaps your Majesty is not aware that I must wait till your Majesty dismisses me ?' 'Oh, good my lady !' I said ; 'why did you not tell me dat before ?'"

Yet a third story again shows the goodness of the Queen's nature and the rather commonplaceness of her mind.

The King went on one occasion into Kent to review the volunteers at Lord Rouncey's. He was accompanied by the Queen.'

"I was in a tent," she said. "There was a sentinel, but I suppose he was looking at something else ; so an old Kentish woman, in a red cloak, made her way in ; and she stood staring at me with her arms akimbo.

"At last she said, 'Well, she is not so ugly as they told me she was !'

"Well, my good woman,' I replied, 'I am very glad of dat.'"

Then the 'Recollections' go on, 'often have I heard Queen Charlotte accused of want of generosity and of hoarding up money to send to Germany. I cannot understand how such stories could have originated, unless it was that some of her sons who were very extravagant, having got all the money that could be procured from their mother, when disappointed of more, cried out against her stinginess.' Incidentally, King George's sons had a strenuous

upbringing for, further on, we read, ‘Princess Sophia told me once that she had seen her two eldest brothers, when they were boys of thirteen and fourteen, held by their arms to be flogged like dogs with a long whip.’

But to return to Queen Charlotte and instances of her generosity.

‘My mother had quite a service of plate made from the gifts of the Queen, who used to say, “Lady George will prefer plate, which she can divide among her children, to presents of jewelry.”’

And then again, ‘The King used to dine early, and he joined the Queen and Princesses after their dinner. Often my mother has told me early delicacies were sent from the table by her Majesty to some sick person, with the remark, “They were all in good health, and did not require things which might induce an invalid to take nourishment.”’

‘I remember once walking by the side of the Queen and my mother at Frogmore, when the former stopped, and, looking back at the house, she said, “I should like a little conservatory there; but if I were to make one, I must take away the money from some who want things that signify more, I will not do that.”’

Another incident related in the ‘Recollections’ is ‘the Queen sending her wedding-dress over to Germany, to the home of her early years.’ And my Aunt Amelia comments indignantly, ‘I think it was Thackeray who laughed at the idea.’

Then we are given a few details of life at court.

‘At Windsor Castle, in those days, luncheon was not, as now, a general meal. Each lady had a chicken, a plate of fruit, and a bottle “of King’s cup” brought to her room every day the same.’ ‘King’s cup,’ we are told, ‘was the peel of a lemon put to soak for some hours in cold water and then sweetened with sugar. It was the King’s own beverage.’

‘On all the highest Saints’ days a tinsel cross of divers colours was placed on the tables of the ladies or sent to their residences, and a guinea was understood to be due in return. A bottle of wine every two days and unnecessary wax candles were, I remember, the perquisites of the ladies’ maids. Candles were extinguished as soon as lit to be carried off by servants; pages were seen marching out before the Royal family with a bottle of wine sticking out of each pocket; and the State page called regularly upon each person who attended the drawing-rooms with his book to receive the accustomed gratuity.’

Sundays in the Castle rise before us in a fog of boredom. ‘The

Queen once said, " My dears, you are very strict in England about Sunday employments—very good and right where rest is concerned, but what is *work* to one may be *rest* to another. If I read all day my poor eyes get tired. I do not like to go to sleep, so I lock my door (that nobody may be shocked) and take my knitting for a little while and then I can read my good books again." The Murray children used to go to the early morning chapel and Amelia noticed how the King ' would never join in the Athanasian Creed, always closing his book when it was used.' Then she relates an anecdote of him and one of his bishops.

' At a period when it was the long-established custom for the Bishops to wear wigs, one of the Episcopal Bench petitioned his Majesty for permission to go without this appendage; and he mentioned as an argument in his favour, that Bishop Juxon wore no wig. " Very true, my Lord," said the King; " but then the Bishops wore beards. Which you please, my Lord—which you please! " '

But now Princess Amelia became seriously ill, and as sea-bathing was ordered for her by the doctors, she and her sister, Princess Mary, went down to Weymouth accompanied by Lady George. Arrived at Weymouth the young Princesses were apparently anxious to enjoy themselves at their ease and go about like ordinary people, but this Lady George would not allow, saying they were ' too young and pretty to go about incognito,' and that she would not ' attend them in their walks into the town unless they would wear the dress which marked their rank.' As it appears that on these occasions Lady George wore the dress of ladies-in-waiting, which at that time consisted of a ' blue cloth habit . . . with buttons, having a star surrounded with the motto " Honi soit qui mal y pense " and a scarlet collar,' the poor princesses' hopes of passing unnoticed must have been small indeed.

All the princesses, so we are told, had their heads shaved and wore wigs. This they had had done so that hurrying from party to party no time should be lost in dressing. But though their wigs might lie on their dressing-tables ' ready dressed and decorated for the evening ' and their existence be a succession of balls and entertainments, in one respect life held less for them than it did for other young women who were not royal. ' As young princesses, when marriages in their own rank of life were almost out of the question (the Continent being sealed up as far as England was concerned, by the will of the first Napoleon) they were unceasingly

thrown into attractive and agreeable society, and, of course were exposed to the risk of forming attachments which could not (after the Marriage Act) be legalised.' It was believed that Princess Amelia finally solved the difficulty by a private marriage with General Fitzroy, 'and she certainly left him all the property she could call her own.'

But to return to Weymouth. The Princesses' brother, the Duke of Clarence, came to spend a few days with them, and as he was in the habit of using very strong language Lady George asked him if, during his stay with her, he would abstain from his usual oaths for fear her small boy would pick them up 'and,' she tactfully added, 'think himself justified after such an example' in making use of them. This the Duke obligingly did, and asked her when he left if he had not been very careful. 'I do feel very grateful sir,' she replied, 'but if your Royal Highness could refrain for a week why not give up a bad habit altogether ?'

After a time the Murray family went to live at the Burnham parsonage where one of their brothers was a curate, Lady George still remaining at the Castle. Burnham was quite near, and the royal carriage and horses, with their mother and the Queen inside, was liable to come trotting up to the parsonage door at any moment. 'The only notice we had of these unexpected visits was the cry of "Sharp !"' a catchword they had apparently fixed on to warn each other to make what preparations they could with as much rapidity as possible. On one of these occasions 'a young party were regaling themselves with bread and cheese in the drawing-room. . . . A grand rout took place, in the midst of which one popped a cheese under the sofa.' To their horror the Queen came in bringing her little dog with her, but luckily the visit passed off without its discovering the cheese.

In the autumn of 1810 Princess Amelia died. 'The poor King never recovered the agitation caused by a farewell interview with that beloved child.' (It is said that it was on this occasion that the Princess told her father of her secret marriage, but this is not mentioned by Amelia Murray.) It was after this that the King became hopelessly insane. 'The year . . . 1811 was a sad one indeed at Windsor. But I have reason to believe his state was not one of suffering. . . . He held conversation with those long gone before ; and the music of Handel, which he played himself, afforded him gratification. . . . His attached Queen, who never shrank from the painful duty of watching over her afflicted husband, visited

his apartments every day. The King's blindness enabled her to sit there for some time without his being conscious of her presence, and therefore his medical attendants were satisfied that these visits caused no evil to their Royal patient.'

'There was about this period an extravagant "furore" in the cause of the Princess of Wales. She was considered an ill-treated woman and that was enough to arouse popular feeling. My brother was among the young men who helped to give her an ovation at the Opera. A few days afterwards he went to a breakfast at a place near Woolwich. There he saw the Princess, in a gorgeous dress which was looped up to show her petticoat, covered with stars, with silver wings on her shoulders, sitting under a tree, with a pot of porter on her knee ; and, as a finale to the gaiety, she had the doors opened of every room in the house, and, selecting a partner, she galloped through them, desiring all the guests to follow her example !' After this the young men's ardour for her cause considerably abated.

In 1812 the Queen wrote from Windsor to Lady George referring to the forthcoming marriage of one of Lady George's daughters, Louisa, to Lord Ilchester. 'The world, my dear Lady George, speaks of there being a good prospect of dear Louisa's settling soon. . . . I have not had the pleasure of seeing any of your family since you left them till the day before yesterday, when I met Miss Louisa in the passage going to Eliza, when I took her arm and conducted her there. She looked lovely, like a rose, and seemed in good health and spirits. I wish it was in my power to make this bit of a letter in some degree entertaining, but nothing passes here now one can call enlivening ; but we are quiet—a blessing, and a great one it is in our distressing situation, and for which I am truly thankful.'

Amelia Murray came out in 1813, and the next year she went to all 'those brilliant fêtes given in honour of the Sovereigns who then visited England.' With Napoleon safely caged—as they imagined—in Elba, London society frothed over with gaiety and 'wonderful excitement.' 'The whole garden of Burlington House was enclosed by tents and temporary rooms.' And here and elsewhere were to be seen the Russian Emperor, 'red and stiff and square ; his son Nicholas . . . a magnificent young Prince . . . the "Hetman" Platoff and twelve of his Cossacks,' the King of Prussia, 'noble-looking, melancholy, and gentlemanlike,' the Prince of Orange, and Prince Leopold of Coburg. The mention of these

last two brings us to the Prince Regent's daughter, the jocular Princess Charlotte, who now appears in the 'Recollections.'

First we are given a story of her childhood.

'A curious circumstance occurred in the Princess's childhood. Mrs. Campbell had been appointed sub-governess ; she was fond of children, and very attractive to them ; the little Princess delighted in going to her room. One day, on finding Mrs. Campbell busy writing, she enquired what it was about. "I am making my will," was the reply. "Oh, then I will make *my* will," and begging a sheet of paper, the child sat down, using a trunk for her table, and taking a pencil, in large hand she wrote as follows :

' "I leave my parrot to So-and-So,
My doll to ——,
My monkey to ——,
And all my non-valuables to Mrs. Campbell."

She then ran away with the paper in her hand, and took it to Lady de Clifford and Dr. Nott. Will it be credited that this bit of childish play was made the ground of a serious accusation ? The sub-governess was accused before a Privy Council of an act of treason in allowing the "Heiress Presumptive" to make a will by which her own sole advantage was succeeding to the Princess's non-valuables. Upon this, Mrs. Campbell resigned her appointment, and it was not until the Prince Regent wished to form an *entourage* agreeable to his daughter, that Mrs. Campbell was sent for with Lady Ilchester, to receive the Princess at Carlton House.'

Now, in 1814, a marriage had been projected between Princess Charlotte and the Prince of Orange. My Aunt Amelia gives her version of the affair. 'I have strong reason to believe it was through a Russian intrigue that she had been thrown in the way of the handsomest Prince in Germany—and that the Grand Duchess of Russia came here for the purpose of disgusting the Princess of England with her intended husband. It did not suit Russian views that England and Holland should be so closely connected.

'The Grand Duchess Catherine of Oldenburg came to this country, I verily believe, for the purpose of putting a spoke into that wheel. She took an hotel in Piccadilly, and earnestly sought the acquaintance of Miss Elphinstone, who was known to be on intimate terms with the Princess. She gave grand dinners and took care to invite the Prince of Orange the night he was to waltz in public with the Princess, as her fiancé. The Grand Duchess

plied him well with champagne, and a young man could hardly refuse the invitations of his hostess ; he was made tipsy and of course the Princess was disgusted. Then, in Miss Elphinstone's apartments, the charming Prince Leopold was presented. Was it to be wondered at that a girl of seventeen should prefer him to the former lover ? The Prince of Orange was speedily dismissed ; and in due time he married the Duchess of Oldenburg's sister.'

Not long afterwards 'after a short sojourn at Cumberland [Cranbourne] Lodge in Windsor Park, the Princess Charlotte went to Weymouth, from whence I remember her coming to Melbury, the house of my brother-in-law, Lord Ilchester. On being presented with a bouquet, and observing that it contained some orange-flowers, she quickly took them out, and flinging them away, exclaimed, "None of those, thank you."

In 1816 Amelia Murray was one of a family party at Abbotsbury Castle, and the Princess often came over from Weymouth, as hilarious as ever. 'One day she was sitting on the great bank of pebbles which extends from Portland to Bridport when she saw some village children, attracted by the Royal liveries, climb to the top of the beach to get sight of the Princess. She watched them ; and as some of the loose pebbles they displaced rolled down towards her, with her gayest manner she called out, "Hallo there ! Princess Charlotte is made of gingerbread ; if you do that you'll break her ! "

Regarding Princess Charlotte's death less than a year after her marriage, Amelia Murray remarks that Queen Charlotte did not consider Sir Richard Croft (the Princess's doctor) a safe adviser, 'but as the Princess, like many other young people, was impatient of recommendations which she considered uncalled for, her grandmother found it useless to interfere.' After the Princess had died in child-birth 'Sir Richard Croft rushed into a room where Mrs. Campbell was—exclaimed, "She is dead, and the child too!"—set off to London and destroyed himself.' (Actually, it was not till several months later that he committed suicide.)

Madame de Staël appears for a moment in the 'Recollections' visiting 'most of the celebrated places in England ; among the rest, Blenheim. The then Duke of Marlborough had a paralytic affection of his speech, and used tablets to make known his requirements. Madame de Stael requested to look at them, and exclaimed, "Il y a toutes les nécessaires de la vie, mais pas un mot d'amour ni d'amitié ! "

The next paragraph of the ‘ Recollections ’ brings us straight to the beginning of another era.

‘ On April 23rd of the year 1819 the Duke and Duchess of Kent landed at Dover. No particular notice was taken of the circumstance. Shortly afterwards, my mother and I were commanded to drink tea at Kensington Palace, to be presented to the Duchess. There was no other company. In the following month the Princess Victoria was born.’

Then, as regards this royal baby’s christening, ‘ It was believed that the Duke of Kent wished to name his child Elizabeth, that being a popular name with the English people ; but the Prince Regent, who was not kind to his brothers, gave notice that he should stand in person as one godfather, and that the Emperor of Russia was to be another. At the ceremony of baptism, when asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury to name the infant, the Prince Regent gave only the name of Alexandrina ; the Duke requested one other name might be added : “ Give her the mother’s also, then ; but,” he added, “ it cannot precede the Emperor.” The Queen, on her accession, commanded that she should be proclaimed as Victoria only.’

Amelia Murray was a great friend of Lady Byron’s, and speaks of her as ‘ traduced and misunderstood’ ; ‘ I hope to leave this world without having said a word that could damage anybody,’ Lady Byron wrote to her in one of her letters, ‘ and so I must let people say what they will of me.’

In her solitude she drew some comfort from putting her sentiments into rhyme.

“ ‘ Forsaken ”—oh ! if thou hadst been
An outcast from mankind for aye,
The desolate, the desert scene,
Where thou was driven in scorn away
Had been my proudly chosen path,

As the poem continues italics alone can express her emotions :

‘ But it must come—thine hour of tears,
When self-adoring pride shall bow,
And thou shalt own my blighted years—
The fate that thou inflictest,—*Thou !*
Thy victim ! ’

Poor woman, one sighs for her—but perhaps part of one’s sigh for Byron.

'In 1820,' writes Amelia Murray, 'I was taken to see the coronation of George IV. We left Dorsetshire at three o'clock in the morning, and, with four horses, we succeeded in arriving in London by eleven o'clock at night.' She also saw the coronation of King William and Queen Adelaide, and, eight years later, that of Queen Victoria where she herself was in attendance as a maid-of-honour. Mrs. Jameson, the authoress, was a friend of hers, and was at this time travelling in America. She wrote to Amelia Murray that she and her party were going up Lake Superior in a canoe and that they 'hailed a schooner with—'

"What news?"

"William IV dead, and Queen Victoria reigning in his stead!"

The 'Recollections' are nearly at an end. Looking back over her seventy years of life the writer is puzzled, as older people often are, that that which is so far off in time should yet be so near in memory. The distant past slowly unrolls again before her mind—the royal family—her own relations—familiar Weymouth, 'I see the numerous family of King George III and Queen Charlotte . . . all these and many more, have gone to their long home—and that they ever existed is, perhaps, remembered by few. . . . I see the father of the present young Earl of Ilchester, a little posthumous child, in his white frock and brown beaver hat, followed by a fat nurse climbing up and down some huge blocks of Portland stone, which had been placed at the farther end of the Esplanade, in preparation for a pier that has now been in existence almost half a century!'

And with these words my Aunt Amelia's voice dies away, and once more she fades into a ghost.

POLYCHROMATA.

BY J. LESLIE MITCHELL.

II. THE EPIC.

I.

BUT you are of the moderns, my friend, and therefore primitive. In the squatting-places of the dawn-men also was the telling the story. They honoured the stylist long before there was the written style. Art was of art, not of life. But to me the tale without theme, the poem without purpose—it is salt without meat. The theme is the man. . . . God mine, as Connan proved !

Here, under the night-sky, above the Khalig, where once Connan sat and planned to snare the immortals—who may believe that all the tales are told ? Our Cairo—she pens such plot and theme through every hour as makes of all recorded tale a ghostly script, a story writ in water.

Mother of aliens, alien to us all ! Yet what city is like to her ? In the scents and smells of her, her days and nights, colours and chance voices there are which wring the heart. Unreasonably. Unforgettably. Her very street-names cry in our ears like bugles : Ismailia, El Musky, El Manakh, Maghrabi, Sheikh Rihan. They ring beyond their meaning. . . .

Surely no language like the English in which to tell the Cairene tale ! I, Anton Saloney, who was Professor of the English Literature in Kazan Gymnasium—that before I became colonel in the army of Deniken and was set to wander the world for the good of the proletarii—say it. Only this wayward, featureless, fatherless tongue may sing our *Polis Polychrois*. Not even the Arabic, I think, comes near to the English for him who seeks to interpret Cairo's soul.

As Connan sought to do.

II.

He came to Cairo, this Englishman—though I think he had perhaps the Irish blood—John Connan, early one July, when there were but few of the tourists and the khamsin blew every morning as a furnace back-blows upon a stoker. I met him outside the Hotel Continental and me he engaged as guide because I did not call

him Mister nor say that I would take him to the place of the genuine antiques.

He was the wit. 'Russian? Good God! Do any survive outside Dostoievsky?' And he regarded me with amaze and sadness, then selected one driver of arabiye from the smellsome horde that surrounded us.

'We will go to the Pyramids,' he said. I assumed the surprise.

'Do they exist outside the little Hichens?'

Thereafter we became the more friendly, though he did not cease to yawn. He was a man whose soul and mind yawned; to me he reminded those bull-men of Assyria whose faces are curved and cruel, yet stamped with an awful weariness in their stone. Then I remembered the frontispiece of a little book.

'You are Connan the poet,' I said. 'I read your poems in Kazan.'

He closed his eyes and mimicked this book-English of mine—for I have never made to learn your speech argots.

'I was Connan the poet. But now I am Connan the lost. I write no poetry, because there is no poetry left in the world. I know, for I have heard men screaming on wire entanglements, and known a woman who sold her body and taunted the buyer.'

'These things have been,' I said. 'Always they have been. They are old as the world is old.'

'I also am old,' he said, 'and every minute I listen to moralists—especially moralists out of Dostoievsky—I age an hour.'

He followed me amidst the Pyramids, Kheops, Khefren, and Men-kaura, yawning. Only the Sphinx amused him. He said of it disrespectful things in that fashion I cannot imitate, with the humorous no-humour of the Englishman or American, comparing its face to that of a notable pugilist. The next fortnight I took him exploring the Cairene bazaars.

And slowly in that fortnight, in the hours we tramped the Khan Khalil or the Suq el Fahlamin—where the little artists of Europe pursue the local colour and the wood-workers of Egypt pursue their art—I came to know that his indifference was no pose. He was the sick man. Mentally. He wrote no poetry. He never read in books. Some thing in life there had been that blinded the windows of his soul. Perhaps that woman who had taunted the buyer.

Once he had been the poet of note in your English world. But that time was long past. He had written nothing for many years.

You must see him, a bull of a man, this Connan—great, with the
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black-blue hair and the blue eyes and ruddy face. His was no bodily sickness. Never I learned the story of the wanderings that had brought him to Cairo or that thing which had shocked the assurance from his heart. Perhaps the woman I imagined was not all to the blame : such the idea that grew on me. Yet I liked him. . . .

The English ‘like !’ So-English a word, the word of ‘a-little-cold-love !’

He had been the ruthless individualist, with the little courage and the little splendour, one who could sing of passion but not of pity. And he had found no pity. He might have been a genius but that he was a brute.

III.

And then, towards the ending of that fortnight, came the change upon him. He yawned not so much. He walked and looked with a stirred interest, a dawning wonder. All unknown to me, some Cairene colour there had been, piercing his darkness, and he had awokened. In a little while I saw in him grow, dimly at first, the purpose and desire.

For evening after evening he turned, though we were far in El Katal or El Fostat, and led back to this place where I had once brought him—here to this table in front of the café of Simon Papadrapoulnakophitos.

Then I understood that the Sharia Khalig had gripped him also, though I knew not to what ends, and I told him the history of it—this street young in Cairo, this street where once was a canal and may still be seen the tide-markings of the waters. Young though it be, it is somehow Cairo itself, and immemorably ancient, as though the city had awaited this street since the first of its years. If you sit long enough in the Khalig all Cairo will sometime pass by—boyar and beggar, brown man and black, and the men of the shades of white, and all the women of the history of the world, the vile and the fair and the pitiful. And you will hear the drifts of all speech and all passion, all hope and all desire if you sit and listen in the Street of All Egypt, that is older in soul than the Ramesids and so young that it rides the electric tram-car. . . .

Perhaps I told him these things, perhaps I told him more. He listened, but the last night of the fortnight it was he who talked. And he invented a little child-game, as I thought it. We would sit

and scrutinise the Khalig's throngs, looking for the face that symbolised the Khalig's—the soul of Cairo herself passing by.

'If we sit long enough we may—who knows?—look on Cairo herself. Eh, Colonel? And we'll know her at once. A face will rise from the crowd-drifts and haunt us, and be gone in a minute . . . And all our lives we'll remember that face.'

I took up the jest and played with it, for I also have been the poet. 'Why a woman? And what will she look like?'

'Could the Khalig or Cairo be anything else but a woman? Oh, she'll look a princess and a dream, fair and wild and dark and splendid, robed and crowned, with jewelled feet and jewelled hands. Age-old and very young, evil and dear and desirable, she'll go by. . . . With the pride of all her days and all her blood and all the colours of Moqattam.'

But there had come on me the irritation. This bull-man unwearyed I found I liked less. The Nietzsche, the fascist, the bolshevik—how may any one of them ever reach to the heart of a maid or a sunset? 'Perhaps like the Christ she will pass poor and despised, with hidden face, without splendour or sin, this Khalig's soul you dream.'

And I can still hear the roar of his bass laughter.

IV.

For a week or the so I did not see him at all. He knew his Cairo by then, and could heed to himself. But I had to live and seek other employers.

Just then came another my way, and for some days I forgot Connan. He was the so-rich Egyptian millionaire, my new client, and had made much money putting the cattle into tins in Argentina. Now he had returned and built a great house in Heliopolis, and me he chartered to compile his family-tree. At the end of three days I had proved his descent from Akhnaton, Cleopatra, and de Lesseps, but he was still unsatisfied. Yet he paid well, so I took no ease, but spent another three days creating and allying his ancestors to Moses, Muhammad, and the Mamelukes. When I had run out of ancestors Semitic I remembered Solga Yon, the Tartar who burned the monks in Kiev. He was my own ancestor, but I take no pride in him. So I brought him on a raid into Egypt and married him into the millionaire's family, thereby ridding my family history of

unpleasantness and adding fresh valour to the blood that had tinned the good bullocks of Argentina.

This work kept me away from the Khalig, and to the café of the little Simon I came not. But the evening I returned again, there, where you now sit, was Connan, great and black against the sunset like an Assyrian bull-god. He was very drunk.

'I will have beer,' I said, 'the English beer.'

He shook his head, calling me Fedor, for it was still his jest that I came out of Dostoievsky. 'A man who will drink beer in the Khalig will crack monkey-nuts on Mount Olympus.'

'It is a kindlier drink than the Greek brandy. I would drink but little of the good Simon's cellar, my friend.'

'I am very certainly drunk, Fedor. But it's a celebration.' He ordered the beer for me. 'For I am no longer homeless. I am a citizen of Cairo, and the rat-like Simon boards me by the month, brandy and all.'

He had rented a bare room in the Khalig and bought himself a table and chair and an Indian string-bed. Simon Papadrapoulakophitos sent him his meals, and he spent his days in sleep and his nights in wandering the streets.

'Down in the Gozi quarter, my room, and above where the metal-smiths chink their tools in early dawn. High up it is, Colonel, and you can hear the rustle of Cairo awake and watch the morning come down the streets like—oh, like Wilde's girl with silver-sandalled feet. And the wind comes up from the early Nile, across the Cairene roofs. . . . Must come and see me there. Sometime. Moralise to your heart's content, and I'll show you the ugliest nigger that ever salaamed outside a Beardsley grotesque.'

'A decadent place, the Gozi.'

'Rented the room from an old Jew who takes the precaution of being an absentee landlord. The house has canal-tidemarks on it still, is five storeys high, and rocks in the traffic. Like a tomb inside—a greasy tomb full of the unease of the unquiet dead—what a phrase! A warren where pallid things live like worms cut off from the sunlight. When I am not listening to the Khalig itself, I lie abed, up there in my garret, listening to the house—as God probably lies and listens to the attenuated whisperings of terrestrial life. . . . When you come, look out for the stairs, Colonel. They're of stone and have no bannisters, and they sweat in the night-time.'

'How long are you to stay there?' I asked.

'Eh ? Till I die or Simon's cellars empty.' He brooded for a little and was not drunk. The Khalig cried below us. I heard his voice come in the half-whisper. ' . . . Or I turn poet again.'

So, only for a moment, then he moved his glass of brandy, and laughed his bass laugh, and was the ruddy animal.

'What a street ! Even its ugliness is as no other. Should see the new *femme de chambre* in the Gozi house. She came three days ago—brings up my food from Simon's waiter and cleans out the room. A Sudanese I think she is, and as hideous as a harpy. Kinky and clumsy, with a plague-pitted face ; a body and soul that have never evolved. . . . Ugly as sin, though willing enough. Hangs round unnecessarily, as though she had something to say and had forgotten the way to say it.'

'A slave, perhaps,' I said. 'There are still slaves.'

'Are there ?' He had forgotten me again. So intent did he sit that I turned to look at that which drew his eyes. But it was only the Khalig. Then he spoke again in the whisper.

'Oh, it'll come to me yet. Some day it'll come to me, and I'll write it all—stuff that'll blind and drown the Georgian poetasters !'

'Eh ?' I said. 'What stuff ?'

'God, man, haven't you eyes ? The Khalig—the Epic of the Khalig !'

V.

Next night, though I came here to the usual table, there was none of the Connan. Nor the night after that, nor the next. Perhaps he had gone from Cairo, grown wearied, I thought, or wandered in some other part of our Many-Coloured. I asked of him from the little Simon. He still sent the meals to the Gozi quarter, but himself had seen nothing of the Lord.

By this he did not refer to divine revelation, but to the Connan, whom he believed a noble, being English, and it being a proper thing for Englishmen to be lords. Just as we of Russia who are neither bolsheviki nor boyars are incomprehensible to English minds.

But the fourth evening the waiter told me a woman awaited me with a message. I went down to the Khalig and the woman who waited came out of shadow and gave me an envelope. Then I saw her face and knew she must be the Sudanese slave.

I turned my eyes quickly from that poor, hideous face, so alien

and unlovely. She stood silent, looking at the Khalig, the while I broke open the envelope. It held an unsigned note.

'Come with the messenger, Colonel. I have something to show you.'

'This is from the Khawaja Connan?' I asked, not looking upon the face I knew was turned towards me. But she said nothing, and I raised my eyes to her. She was making motions with her fingers. As she did so, set in that so-grotesque masque of a face I saw her eyes, deep and brown and sad, infinitely patient and beautiful eyes. I made the foolish noises before I understood.

She was dumb.

VI.

The Sudanese left me to climb alone, and in the darkness I found that the stairs did verily sweat, as Connan had made avow. The stairs were without the rail, and far down, as in a well, was the lamp of the street doorway. I spread my fingers against the wall and so climbed to the ultimate attic, where was Connan's room.

I knocked and went in, and Connan, sitting in his chair, wheeled round. For a moment I thought him again drunk. He sat with hair like the feathers, and his ruddy face as one sleepless. He read my thoughts and laughed aloud, and his laughter echoed down and down into the silence of the house. Not until I heard the echo had I ever noted how cruel was that laugh of his.

'Drunk as a mujik, Fedor. But not with brandy. There has never yet man drunk what I've been drinking.'

He waved his hand to the room, and then I saw. It was littered with the scrawled sheets of paper. On the table in front of Connan was the disordered pile and on the string-bed another. He thrust a bundle upon me.

'Sit down, man, sit down and read. Not all of it—it would take you hours. Only that. Read it.'

I sat on the bed with the pile of pages on my knee, and for the little while the so-dim light of the oil-lamp and the English script vexed me; also it was a chance page, and much had gone before. But almost at the once a line leapt to my eyes and rang in my brain. In the minute I had forgotten Connan and his room, and was far on the wings of Connan's genius.

For I had lied. He was the genius, and I knew that this century might never see his like. Once I was the Professor of English Literature, and I have read much in the language, but of nothing

to compare with those sheets that lived and sang in the Connan's garret of the Gozi.

For it was the song of the Khalig he had written, the song of all Cairo, the song of Egypt and the world and the days unnumbered since first the brown Stone Men drifted their dusk hordes across the Nile. In the Khalig's colours and voices he had found the tale of all humanity and told it as I had never read it told before—not even in the songs of your Shelley. Of the daedal wars and love and death and the birth was his tale; sunset and morning and the travail of heat and the lash; the battle-song ringing across the waiting lines at dawn; the bridal song and the birth-night agony, and all the quests and fulfilments of men. All the voices that Cairo has ever known cried from his pages—the emir's voice and the voice of kings and the love-song of the slave outside his wattle hut. . . . God mine! I can but remember it now as one remembers the faint chords of music once heard and lost. . . .

And I sat and read on and on, till presently, out of the Khalig's colour and clamour I heard arise a new note, faint at first, but clearer growing till it dominated. And I understood with sudden flash of memory Connan's child-game at Simon's café. What I had read was but background and scene, and this was the Epic of the Khalig's soul—of her who was life and more than life, Purpose and Desire and Achievement. Out of the dreams and changing fantasies she came, veiled and singing, lonely and alien, she who was love divine itself—and yet had known no lover. . . .

I knew of a great silence. I had finished the last page. I looked at Connan, great, a bull-god in the black shadows from the little lamp. But in the dimness his eyes were bright-shining.

'Well?'

'You are the genius, friend Connan,' I said, and could think of no more.

'Genius? I have achieved the impossible, Colonel.' His voice rang with the arrogance. 'I've done what every Cairene poet has dreamt of since the days of Kusún—found the Soul of the Khalig, as I swore I'd do. One by one I draw the veils from her face.' His cruel laughter boomed again. 'To her first bridal I bring the Spirit of the Khalig.'

I cannot explain it, but the strange shiver passed through me then. I made ready to go. 'If you do not rest and sleep you will have the breakdown.'

But he did not hear me. He had pulled more paper towards

him and had begun to write, and when I said the good-night I might have been to him but one of the murmurs that ever haunted that room.

Then I passed down through the dank darkness, and so into the midnight Khalig, with the music of Connan's lines still ringing in my head. Out in the night-quietened way it was cool and sweet, and I stopped and looked up at the stars. . . .

And suddenly a so-great desolation came on me, under those bright stars. For I could not doubt the truth of Connan's vision. Life—beauty and the splendour, blood and strife and colour—and nothing more. Pity and faith and hope—the foolish whispers drowned in the roar of the Khalig. . . .

I remember standing with that foolish, wistful ache at heart, looking up at the light-glow from Connan's room.

VII.

From dawn the next day I was followed and haunted by the premonition—the foolish thought uprising urgent and crying: This happens, this is Fear. It wheeled through the brain as I worked in a room of the millionaire's house at Heliopolis. Somehow its concern was Connan. All day it haunted me, and in the evening when I returned to change, before taking the millionaire and his family on a moonlight excursion to Gizeh and the tombs of their ancestors, I made the determination. I would go down the Khalig and call at the Gozi house.

But opposite the little Simon's I was seen and a letter brought to me. It had been awaiting me since mid-day.

I looked at the Connan's writing. 'For God's sake come to me. I am afraid.'

That shock that follows a premonition justified was mine. In ten minutes I was in the Gozi, had climbed the stair, and knocked on Connan's door.

He bade me come in, but in the dark doorway I stood hesitant, I remember, till he lit a match, and so the lamp, and we looked at each other. . . . And I looked upon the face of a man who had seen terror.

His black-blue hair above the temples was patterned in crisp-grey. I stared at that hair of his, and it seemed to me that the markings were in shape like the impress of fingers. Then I looked round the room. The papers were gone, but in a corner—there was none of the fireplace—were heaped great piles of charred pages.

'Yes, that's the Epic, that's the song of Cairo's soul that the world will never hear.'

I turned back to him. He laughed dreadfully and covered his face with his hands. So doing, his fingers covered the greyed lines on his hair, and I stood frozen with the understanding.

'God mine, but why?'

'Why? If I hadn't burned it, man, hadn't sent for you, I'd have gone mad. Do you hear?' He stood up and his voice rose to the scream. "Mad. Look at me. . . . God, say it—say I'm not mad! . . ."

And then, in the burst of remembered fear and horror, he told me of the happenings of the night and morning. He had written all through the night, leading the Epic triumphant to its triumphant conclusion, but with the coming of the dawn he had stopped, exhausted. The lightening of the East roused him a little. He went to the window, and opened it, and leaned out into the air. The false dawn had passed from the sky, and it was quiet as the first morning of creation. Down below, far off in the quarter, he heard the tinkling tools of some Gozi smith. Something else also he heard, but thought it a delusion, and still leant there, leaning with closed eyes.

He had thought he heard a footstep. The delusion recurred. He opened his eyes and turned round. . . .

'My God, don't look at me like that, Colonel! She was real, I tell you. She stood not three feet away from me, her arms outstretched—*The Spirit of the Khalig, the woman I had created!*'

He covered his face again, then jumped up and raved at my silence.

'She was real, I tell you, real. Veiled and unearthly, but real. I think I cried out, for I knew I was mad. And then, my God, she was in my arms, her arms around my neck, and we kissed each other, and there was such magic and wonder in her kiss as my Epic had never known. . . . A ghost, a dream, a symbol—she kissed my lips, Colonel!—and called me the one lover for whom she had waited throughout the ages——'

I tried to laugh at him, but the laughter choked in my throat. He was staring blindly in front of him, and suddenly he broke into a whispered chant.

'*Oh my beloved, you for whom I have sought so long! So-weary and never-ending they've seemed, the years in their suns and shadows. . . . To-night, at midnight, I come to our bridal.*'

'I think I fainted then. When I awoke the Khalig was stirring below, and I was alone in the room.'

VIII.

So, in that early dawn, he had taken the Epic of the Khalig, the thing of beauty which he had created, and burned it. Page by page he had burned it, then spent the rest of the day fighting wave after wave of madness which rose up out of his heart to engulf him.

But the exhaustion he had held off crept on him now. He had sat down on the bed, and, while I talked, his head began to nod in weariness.

I talked on, and he lay back with closed eyes. Of anything and everything I talked, except poetry and the Khalig. I talked of autumn and stars and his English fields, and smell of ploughed lands, and kindly peasant song. Of all the quiet, secure things I talked, and in a little I looked at him and saw he was asleep.

I spoke on, dropping my voice to the whisper, then stopped, and tip-toed over to him, and listened to his breathing. Nature had come to his help and he was safe from dream and delusion . . . I remember his face turned from the light, and of how I thought it, in despite its cruelty and wan strength, the face of a child, pitiful and uncomprehending. . . .

I closed the door of his room and crept down the stairs of that unquiet house. The darkness moved as if alive. There was no lamp and I had to feel for each step. In the entrance doorway, in the radiance of the street, I stopped and listened, hesitating, then shrugged at the foolishness which had come upon me also.

For it had seemed to me that I heard, far in the depths of the house, the sound of a woman weeping, desolately, as one in despair.

IX.

The stuff of dreams we are ! How might I have known—I who do not know even yet ?

For the next morning Connan was discovered dead in his room. Somewhere near the midnight he had shot himself through the heart with the second chamber of his revolver.

In the doorway of his room, also shot through the heart, lay the Sudanese slave. . . .

Accident ? Coincidence ? *God mine, she was clad in the bridal robes of a Cairene maid !*

'JOURNEY'S END': ANOTHER VIEW

BY T. C. FOWLE.

In the June number of THE CORNHILL there appeared an article '*Journey's End*: A War Play and the Younger Generation,' by Mr. G. A. Martelli, who, while allowing that well-known play certain merits, on the whole adversely criticised it on the general grounds that—emotionally—it left him and those 'people of his generation' (the post-war) who had seen it—'cold.' How far one individual can accurately answer for a whole generation it is difficult to say, but one must do Mr. Martelli the justice to assume that he would not have made this generalisation without some basis of fact, and a reply from one of the older generation may be of interest.

Mr. Martelli is afraid his criticism may lay him open to the 'dangerous thrust': 'Of course you couldn't appreciate it. You weren't out there,' and goes on to ask: 'Isn't this quite irrelevant?' Of course it is, and the thrust—if ever actually made—is not 'dangerous' but childish, a form of criticism scarcely worth serious notice, so that I cannot guess why Mr. Martelli put up this ninepin, except for the somewhat simple pleasure of knocking it down. Every thinking person is well aware, without being reminded of it, that it is 'absurd' to suppose that 'nobody can appreciate a work of art unless he has had experience of the subject it treats.' Our capacity for appreciating art would indeed be small if this were so. I venture to state, for instance, that not half of the large number of people of both sexes, and all ages and conditions (the *universality* of the *Journey's End* audience is remarkable), who flock to the play in question were ever on the Flanders front at all. Some were on other fronts where the conditions were as different as chalk is from cheese, some were on no fronts at all but engaged on war-work in England or elsewhere, some were 'keeping the home fire burning' in the shape of essential businesses and so forth. Yet by far the greater part of these audiences are certainly not left 'cold'—or the play would cease to run, and considering the numbers of the post-war generation which must figure amongst them, I am inclined to suspect that a proportion of these too must find the play not altogether unmoving.

It is rather difficult to analyse why Mr. Martelli and his friends find the play emotionally unsatisfying, since he is strictly fair in giving it its due. '*Journey's End*' is a faithful reproduction of its model . . . there is no defect in Mr. Sherriff's realism. . . . Mr. Sherriff, far from being deficient as an artist, either in observing

or expressing, is extremely competent . . . in the psychological portraiture of his various characters, his touch is sure and never merely photographic . . .' This, and some more to the same effect is high praise. Yet—when Mr. Martelli comes to what he calls the 'high points' of the play : Raleigh's grief at the death of Osborne, Stanhope's outburst that he drinks to forget, Raleigh's death, he is left 'cold.' 'Sometimes, indeed, the note almost sounds—unlike the rest of the play—a hint of falseness and sentimentality.' But if ever there was a play from which sentimentality was—and indeed had to be—absent, it was *Journey's End*, since for the audiences who watched it, and among whom were so many who had suffered in different ways in the cataclysm which it portrayed, a single false note—pardonable perhaps in another play—would have been unbearable.

'The effect it [the play] achieves of intense physical discomfort, and of an effort of persistence *rather than heroism* protracted almost beyond endurance. . . .' (The italics are mine.) If 'persistence protracted almost beyond endurance,' whether in war or in the daily round of peace, is not heroism, what is? Or is Mr. Martelli of the opinion that this quality is only found in the 'high points' of life?

'The War, as seen by those who fought in it, was nothing but a gigantic catastrophe of exactly the same quality as a railway accident. . . . One could make good melodrama of such a disaster. It has been done successfully at the Lyceum Theatre. But there is nothing ennobling or moving in the spectacle.' In the first place, participants in catastrophes do not 'see' these catastrophes as tragedies, or themselves as heroes. It is the business of the artist to bring these aspects forward. In the second, whatever course the Lyceum melodrama may have taken, there are real accidents on land and sea which occasion the same qualities of courage, endurance and self-sacrifice, as did the War, and which therefore—if competently portrayed on the stage—would be both moving and ennobling.

Why—an interesting psychological question this—does *Journey's End*, according to Mr. Martelli, leave the post-war generation cold? Is it because they lack the imagination to appreciate a 'setting' so far removed from them as the War? There are certain plays which make a distinct call on the imagination in order to appreciate them to the full. That artistic production, *Porgy*, with its picture of negro life so alien to an English public, is a recent case in point. Or is it that under a superficial hardness, the post-war generation—far from being cosmopolitan and 'continental' as they often like

to think—are really 'more English than the English,' and afraid of emotion?

In conclusion let us approach the question from another angle. The most typical young Englishman of the post-war generation—at least, according to a statement made in a recent article¹ by Mr. Beverley Nichols, himself a leading young *littérateur*—is Mr. Noel Coward, and the latter's best, certainly most serious, play is *The Vortex*. Of quite a different *genre* from either *Journey's End* or *Porgy*, in the fact that it called for no imagination on the part of the audience since it was placed in post-war England, and dealt with the somewhat hackneyed 'cocktail characters' to which we are now accustomed, this play affected the older generation in the same way as *Journey's End* apparently affects the younger. While acknowledging its technical excellences, it left us 'cold.' The principal characters—Florence, a tiresome, hysterical, middle-aged female, with a penchant for young lovers, and her neurotic son Nicky, addicted to drugs, seemed to us rather small beer to fill the implications of a title like *The Vortex*. From the dramatic point of view it matters not at all whether the characters on the stage are saints or sinners; what matters vitally is that they should 'grip' you. This, in the case of *The Vortex*, they certainly failed to do as far as I was concerned. In the last act, for instance, Nicky implores Florence to give up her lovers, and he will do the same by his drugs. While admiring Mr. Coward's acting as Nicky, I'm afraid I was so hard-hearted as to care uncommonly little whether the immoral mamma was 'saved,' or whether the son gave up his drugging. Both of them appeared to me people of no importance, whose ultimate fate was a matter of no interest except to themselves. Yet this play was received by the younger generation with rapturous enthusiasm, and in the article just referred to, Mr. Nichols writes of it with the utmost seriousness, and as one treading on the holy ground of high drama. What seemed to me, for example, merely an excellent *coup de théâtre*, the curtain at the end of the second act, is for him in the nature of a 'parable'! All this enthusiasm and seriousness, not to say solemnity, over a play like *The Vortex*, appears to us of the older generation as naive and unsophisticated.

Finally, I'm afraid that, as in the case of most arguments on matters of art, all that Mr. Martelli and I can say to each other is: 'Well—if you're the sort of person that likes that sort of thing, that's the sort of thing you'll like.' The vicissitudes of Flory and Nicky, and their kind, move the younger generation, and those of Stanhope, Osborne and Raleigh ours. *De gustibus.* . . .

¹ See 'Behind the Scenes in Playwriting,' in *Nash's Magazine* for January 1928.

THE RECTOR OF STILLER FLORUM.

AMONG the Rector's friends were Betelgeuse, a yellow star, the Ringlet butterfly with its soft russet underwing, the whitethroat which nested deep among the nettles, and the rich purple flower of the Meadow Orchis. In sunshine or in moonshine, with all these and others he communed in the shadowed pastures of the Stillwood Vale.

These shadows were cast by the giant oaks which had grown therein, without let or hindrance, from century to century. A rare botanist the Rector, who was often afoot with the first dews of dawn, and who would rest at noontide under the shadow of an oak to eat a meditative meal.

The Stillwood Vale is the most secret and lonely valley in England. On the west it is shut in by the tree-mantled slopes of Lambert's Castle and Coney's Castle. On the east it is embattled by Stonebarrow, Char Down and Har Down, which run on into a nameless billow of hills. On the north the bluff promontories of Pilsdon and Lewesdon stand sentinel, while down the Vale runs the wayward little Still, tinkling like a poem through wide margins of green meadow.

There is not a road, not even a stone in the Vale proper, only two vagrant lanes and one lonely farm. A few little villages cling to the edges of the Vale beneath the slopes of Coney's Castle or of Pilsdon Pen.

The Rector, if he listened carefully, might hear a hymn-tune being played on the distant Beaminster bells. At dawn he might overhear the merry gossip of bees swarming under some far-away lime. . . . Or at nightfall a hedgehog would move hissing through the lush grass. An otter would whistle to his mate; and one evening the Rector, listening intently, seemed to catch, wind-borne, a chant of monastic Latin climbing starward from beneath the half-discerned tower of Whitchurch Canonicorum. But on reflecting that the singing monks had been brown-cowled ghosts since the days of Thomas Cromwell, he listened again—only to hear the babble of the Still as it interlaced its way through the valley to lose itself utterly in the mizmaze of Stillmouth sands.

Sometimes the Rector would clamber up the slopes of Pilsdon Pen and from there would gaze beyond Dorset, across the coloured counties, league upon league into the blue. . . . Or else he would turn southward to the sea and look again. Then dropping backward through history he would see over the shoulder of Haf Down Monmouth's men, armed with bill-hook and with scythe, tramping up and down the hilly road from Lyme. . . . Again, with the fair weather of spring, the sunlight might glint upon the gilt figurehead of Astarte at the prow of some Phoenician galley, beating up from Gaul across the combing rollers of the bay.

One fair Saturday in June the Rector was gazing benignly upon his mixed herbaceous border, while his curate battled desperately with a sermon. Like Wordsworth, the curate best ordered his thoughts while marching up and down a straight gravel path. At intervals the curate would put a question to the Rector, but the Rector heeded him but little. It hardly mattered, for the other marched so quickly that he was at the end of the path before the Rector could embellish a reply. But when the curate did come back the Rector's reply generally coincided with a fresh query from the curate, somewhat after the style of Alice in Wonderland.

'Shall I illustrate my thesis by a reference to haymaking?' inquired young Mr. Hamilton.

The blend of colour painted by his Chinese peonies and Lupins, pink misting into blue, was giving the Rector a sunny moment, but he considered the problem gravely.

'Ah! yes, by hand,' he mused. 'First mown, then lying in swath, then tedded and turned to dry the underside. In the evening rake it into rollers and put them up into haycocks. Next morning cast the rollers into parcels, turn them and when dry push them up into weales—those are long ridges . . .'

Left—right, left—right, back came Mr. Hamilton.

'What is your opinion of prayers for rain, Rector?'

'Of course, if there was any fear of rain, the weales would be put up into pooks. Then you might bring in a reference to Rhinanthus crista-galli,' he added thoughtfully.

Left—right, left—right, back came the curate.

'And of the Commination Service, Rector?' he demanded.

'The Cock's Comb or Yellow Rattle, named in Dorset the Rottlepenny,' the Rector answered firmly.

'Excuse me, Rector!' said a bewildered curate. 'I don't quite understand.'

'It's a flower of the mowing-grasses. The farmers dislike it, you know, and when its seeds rattle in the capsule it warns them that it is time to be a-mowing.'

'Ah! yes,' said Mr. Hamilton vaguely, and he strode on down to the end of the path, over the green sward and round a Turkey oak. Pausing a moment to admire the Judas-tree, he made his way back to the Rector.

'It is so difficult,' complained the curate.

And the Rector murmured gently.

'Landmarks, of course, should not be removed.'

Then, heeding Mr. Hamilton's look of wild surmise, he added softly :

'I was referring to your highly interesting criticism of the Commination Service. But, my dear fellow, why not put it out of your head altogether until the evening? Walk over Coney's Castle down to Lyme Regis and bathe from the Cob! Take your lunch with you! Then you will be fresh for to-morrow.'

'Yes, I do feel heavy-headed,' admitted the curate. 'I was listing those tombs after breakfast, and there was such a strong aroma arising from the lane by the churchyard. But do you think that you will be all right by yourself? Suppose something should happen?'

'The odour was undoubtedly that of tansy,' smiled the Rector. 'The lane is full of it. Yes, I will guarantee to take care of the parishes of Stiller Florum and Stiller Avium. So run along! Nothing can happen. Nothing ever does happen.'

There was a mocking cry, as a jay, cobalt and turquoise, flamed through the branches of the Turkey oak.

'But will it rain?' asked Mr. Hamilton.

'Consult scarlet pimpernel, the poor man's weatherglass!' said the Rector severely. 'Observe also the wood sorrel in the pockets of the beech-trunks! The one closes its petals, the other its leaves on the approach of rain. Use your eyes!'

But the severity of his words was belied by the kindness of that dark blue glance, shining so strangely under the crest of thick white hair. Mr. Hamilton felt suddenly happier and ran along, resolving in future to use his eyes.

The Rector, however, went back to the appraisal of his herbaceous border, and along the thick grass verge he trod like

Agag. His eyes mirrored columbine and Canterbury bells : here was love-in-a-mist and there, bedizened like Jezebel, the Turk's cap lily. A tall grenadier was the stately iris, the delphiniums a dark delight. These, too, the Rector admired, matching Paul Nelke against Blue Boy, but lastly awarding his gold medal to Monarch of Wales.

For a moment he regretted that he had not laid a carpet of violas beneath the torrent of white Rambler roses, when . . .

' Speak to you privately a moment ? ' came the troubled voice of the Squire.

Near by there was an arbour over which foamed Petit Louis in pink and tangled riot. There the Rector led his old friend, and they settled themselves in two basket chairs. The Rector lit his pipe.

' About my son,' said the Squire abruptly. ' Taken up with a girl called Rose Morin. But, of course, you know her.'

' She and her mother make nets at their cottage in Stiller Avium. The father was a wandering Frenchman, but he married Keturah Morin and settled down. Then after fifteen years' married life he vanished. Roving blood, I suppose. But Rose is good and dainty.'

' Dainty enough, but devilish sly ! Picnics on Lewesdon, circuses at Bridport, excursions to Lambert's Castle, courting, Rector, courting her like any yokel ! Arming her down the lanes ! Disgraceful ! Do something, Rector ! ' implored Colonel Ansty. ' May have to sell up, leave the place. Speak to Hubert, speak to the girl ! Eternally grateful.'

' M'm, yes,' said the Rector softly. ' But she's a good maid, Colonel. I do not think that you need be uneasy. There is something strange about the mother—an aloofness, perhaps. I shall do my best.'

His answer smoothed away some of the puckers of anxiety that creased the Colonel's brow and aged him so pathetically.

' Thank you, old friend ! Best is your best. Moving along now. Send young rascal, Hubert, to see you at six o'clock. That do ? Gratitude, self and wife.'

' That will do excellently, Colonel, thank you ! '

Colonel Ansty walked away. With unseeing eyes he looked over the Rectory garden and he muttered :

' The Guards ! What would they say in the Guards ? '

The Rector, who had accompanied him as far as the churchyard wall, found his eyes straying to the ivy-leaved toad-flax, with its

cymbals of yellow-flecked lilac. Mother of thousands ! Such a far-sighted plant, thrusting its capsules into crannies so that its seeds might set and thereafter burgeon ! That blind urge. . . .

His thoughts were broken into by Mrs. Samways, the church caretaker.

'I'm sure I wish 'ee good marnèn, Rector,' said Mrs. Samways.

'My darter, Joan, was pickèn theäse yellow clotes down along Duck Pool,' she ventured.

'Yes, yes, Mrs. Samways. Come along !' said the Rector encouragingly.

'She got 'ee theäse clotes, an' Robin Hoods an' giddy ganders.'

Mrs. Samways, whose hand had been hidden behind her back, suddenly proffered a nosegay of yellow waterlilies, Red Campion and Meadow Orchis.

'Thank you, Mrs. Samways, and thank Joan for me.'

The Rector was touched, but in his inmost heart he knew that the unexpected gift foreshadowed a request. So he waited patiently.

'I've cut all they coffin-handles off the church tapers,' remarked Mrs. Samways apropos of nothing.

'Ah ! yes. Curious how wax guttering into that form upsets some people,' mused the Rector. He understood that Mrs. Samways was making much of herself. There was something in the wind.

'My darter were pickèn the clotes avore breakfast,' repeated Mrs. Samways despairingly.

'Come, come, Mrs. Samways ! This won't do. You must unburden your mind.'

Mrs. Samways broke into full spate.

'An' that kapple-feäced cow made her afeared, an' she went over to the hilly pasture, an' she went into the beech wood, an' she seed her brother, Joe, asleep, drunken he was, lookèn like a Jack o' Lent an' snorèn like a humstrum. Dear, oh dear, oh deary me !'

And Mrs. Samways wrung her hands and wept.

'Looking like a scarecrow and snoring like a harmonium ! How dreadful, Mrs. Samways,' went on the Rector with a hurried mental start, as he realised that picturesqueness of the description was intriguing him more than the horrid fact.

'Now what can we do about it ? Cheer up, Mrs. Samways !'

'It be that maid, Rose Morin. He were wild about the taffety piece. Then they had a miff. An' now she've a-taken up wi' . . . Off to all the pomps she be, and Joe's heart a-broken. So he's off a-drinkèn. Will 'ee zay a word in season to 'en, Rector ?'

'Rose Morin is a good maid ; she's not so fanciful as all that,' said the Rector firmly. 'But send Joe along to see me at four o'clock, Mrs. Samways, and I shall talk to him. Not later than four o'clock, mind !'

Mrs. Samways bobbed to the Rector, straightened her bonnet and departed churchwards. She sniffed defiantly, as she battled resolutely with her tears.

The Rector gazed at the blue face of the church clock.

'Dear me ! It is nearly noon,' he reflected. 'And the plot thickens, as they say. This would have interested Hamilton. How the boy would have loved to straighten out this little tangle ! I am afraid things are a little dull for him here after his strenuous days in Bermondsey.'

Chug-chug, chug-chug ! A battered motor-cycle swung into the lane under the churchyard wall. Ernest Forsey, the rider, dismounted and came alertly towards the Rector.

The Rector was fond of young Ernest of the clean-cut features and honest eyes. He was one of the few of his parishioners who had moved with the times and who had struggled out of the Stillwood Vale. Ernest was making a good living as a first-class motor-mechanic in Bridport. He would go far.

'Well, Ernest !' said the Rector with a kindly smile.

'There be a rare to-do up to Stiller Avium, Rector. Happen you'd better come along.'

'What is the matter, Ernest ?'

'The neighbours be a-cryèn against that Keturah Morin. She've overlooked 'um, seemingly. Little Johnny Roberts, he'd a-picked some vlowers vrom Keturah's garden t'other day. She drove 'en out. Now this marnèn he've a-sickened. And Mrs. Roberts' pig, Rector. He jumped the sty-door and was runnèn rafted drough the zummerleaze. Didd'n cry at all, just a-choked.'

'Most extraordinary conduct of the pig ! Running speechlessly through the meadow-grass ! And little Johnny Roberts sick ! I must think.'

'Come eleven o'clock, I went home-along to zee my mother,' said Ernest. "'Twere about 9 o'clock the pig were in his fantods. Then little Johnny came back wi' his sister 'bout eleven. He were sick.'

'So the neighbours were zayèn that the pig was hag-rod and little Johnny overlooked. An' Mrs. Roberts, she pulled out a long darnèn-needle and zays her'd draw blood vrom Keturah. And the

neighbours allowed her'd better do it. Then they all a-marched to Keturah's cottage, but Rose and Keturah a-hapsèd the door, an' they were for drowèn stones against the windows. So I've a-come vor you, Rector, to make 'un zee the error of their ways.'

'So you don't believe in hag-ridden pigs, Ernest ?'

'Don' hold wi' um, nor wi' witches nother,' said Ernest briefly.

'Two miles to Stiller Avium ! Oh ! for Hamilton and his bicycle !' said the Rector wistfully. 'But I must go and stop these foolish folk.'

'Get on the bracket o' the bike, Rector. I'll take 'ee there in five minutes.'

The Rector eyed the motor-bicycle with a mingling of fascination and repugnance. He sighed.

'You're a good boy, and I'll trust you. So please ride with careful velocity ! Oh ! what foolish people !'

'Stunpolls !' agreed Ernest. He kicked the engine into a roar.

They fled up a deep sunken lane, the hedges fifteen feet above their heads, under tunnels of green gloom, out into sunlight, then into sunlight dappled with shadow. The Rector endeavoured to keep his mind off the manifold perils which encompassed him. He did so by marking down the wild flowers as they flitted by. He had just noticed with approval the yellow spike of Great Mullein blooming behind a clump of freckled foxgloves, when lo and behold ! they were in Stiller Avium.

The Rector alighted hastily from the bracket and went towards a little throng of villagers who stood outside a cottage. They were mainly women, and the Rector saw with rising wrath that two window-panes had been broken by flung stones.

His blue eyes flashed.

'Go back to your houses at once !' he ordered. 'I shall settle this matter in my own way. How dare you behave like this ?'

The crowd melted slowly away, the men being the first to go. They did not dare to look him in the face.

'Now then, Ernest, we will go straight to Mrs. Roberts' cottage,' said the Rector.

As they went, the Rector drew upon his stock of deep lore and good common sense. Curiously enough, he appealed to Ernest.

'What do you think is the matter with little Johnny Roberts, Ernest ?'

'Eaten somethèn,' said the sagacious Ernest.

The Rector nodded.

Mrs. Roberts awaited them at her cottage door. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears, and she still vengefully gripped a long stocking-needle.

The Rector looked at her for a moment, and his anger melted away into sorrow. The mother defending her son, and not knowing how to do it save by drawing blood from the witch who had overlooked him ! That this legacy of the Dark Ages should still persist was, he felt, in some way a reproach to his own ministry.

' My poor woman ! ' he said pitifully.

Mrs. Roberts burst into tears and dropped the stocking-needle.

' Let me see little Johnny,' he told her.

He passed straight into the bedroom, where little Johnny, aged six, lay in bed. He seemed more scared than ill. His sister, Alice, sat on a chair by the bedside. She rose and curtsied to the Rector.

The Rector leaned over the bed and looked into the boy's eyes. He uttered a sigh of relief.

' The pupils are not dilated. Not belladonna, Ernest, at any rate ? '

He sat down on the bed and in a friendly way held one of little Johnny's hands.

' Now, Johnny, you are not to be scared about witches. There aren't any. They all flew away on their broomsticks, long before I came to Stiller Avium. Now, Alice, you are a sensible child. Tell me quite truthfully ! I expect your mother gives you biscuits, and you and Johnny eat nasturtium leaves with them, don't you ? '

' Ees, zir,' said Alice.

' Do you know the Alleluia plant, Alice ? Its flowers are like a bell, and pink or white. Sometimes you find it in the pocket of a beech trunk. The green leaves taste rather like lemons. I expect you have eaten that too, haven't you ? '

' Ees, zir,' said Alice.

' Now, Mrs. Roberts, tell me exactly of what little Johnny complained, when he came home ! '

' He zaid his head did turn about, Rector : he were sickish, and his arms a-stiffened.'

' M'm,' said the Rector, turning to his distinguished colleague, Ernest Forsey. ' Sounds like conine. Now then, Alice, do you remember looking at a plant that had a smell like that of mice ? '

' Ees, zir ! '

Alice's eyes grew bright at the recollection.

' Johnny and me zmelled a little mousey in the hedge up to Varmer Johnson's white geäte. But he would'n show 'issel. And Johnny eated a lot of green leaves, he zaid as 'twere eltrot. And when I was frightened, he a-eated a lot mwore.'

' H'm, bravado of the male animal,' mused the Rector. ' Undoubtedly hemlock ! Ernest, get on to your bicycle and run along to Farmer Johnson's white gate. Pick some of the plant that is called " Break your mother's heart," and bring it back to me ! '

' I know 'en,' said Ernest and departed forthwith.

' Now, Mrs. Roberts, call in some of the neighbours, who with you concocted this foolish fancy about Mrs. Morin.'

Ernest was back again with surprising speed. He bore a large bunch of hemlock.

' As 'ee do zay, Rector, they ha' a zmell o' mice,' he announced. The Rector took them and seemed relieved.

' Tell me, Alice, were these the leaves that Johnny ate ? '

' Ees, zir,' replied Johnny and Alice.

' Listen everybody ! ' said the Rector. ' In the leaves and fruits of this plant there is a poison called conine. Luckily these are first-year plants, when the poison has but little power. Look at the smooth stem with the purple spots, notice the smell as of mice ! That is how your children should know that it is not eltrot nor any other form of cow-parsley. Give little Johnny some warm salt water, Mrs. Roberts ! In two hours he'll be as right as rain. He is not so much hurt, as frightened by this talk of witches.

' But he is never to eat this again, nor any purplish black berries, that he may see in the hedgerows. Those are the worst of all : they are the berries of the deadly nightshade.'

' The Rector will now tell 'ee all about the pig,' announced Ernest with full faith in his Rector.

' Show me the pig,' smiled the Rector.

The pig lay exhausted within the recesses of his sty, but he mustered up enough spirit to greet his visitors with an inimical grunt.

The Rector was on slippery ground : some elusive passage about speechless pigs was haunting his brain, when . . .

' One of they traipsèn Squires passed by yestereve ; sellèn baskets she were. She looked at the pig and zaid how 'twere a fine one. Do 'ee think she've overlooked 'en, Rector ? ' said Mrs. Roberts hopefully.

' No, no, no ! ' said the Rector emphatically. But Lavengro

with his white hair and flashing eyes came stalking out of the past, and the tricksy passage stood out word by word. . . .

'Good heavens! Does it still happen?' he asked himself. He peered into the sty.

'Do I see a potato under all that litter, Ernest?'

After strenuous raking in the clutter of straw Ernest found a brace of potatoes still in their skins.

'Now if you split them open, you will probably find them full of mustard,' said the Rector.

And it was so.

Amid a chorus of surprise the Rector explained.

'If the pig were really sick, he couldn't run about all over the fields. It's an old trick.'

'That gypsy maid intended to steal the pig. Some of them came back in the night with a sack and threw him these potatoes just to stifle his squeal. A squealing pig would wake up the whole village. But you can't make a pig eat, when he won't eat. So they gave it up and went away. Early this morning the pig *did* swallow one of the potatoes. . . .

'Now I am going to see Mrs. Morin. What on earth made you think that she could be a witch?'

'She did gi' herself out vor a witch, Rector,' ventured one of the women shamefacedly. 'An' we've a-zeed two or dree twoads in 'er garden. An' when Johnny an' the pig got in this snuddle. . . .'

'Toads! Rubbish! My own garden is full of them. Don't let me hear another word about toads and overlooking! Doubtless you've all got bullocks' hearts stuffed full of pins up your chimneys. Wicked folly!'

And with that shrewd thrust he left them.

With Keturah Morin he was kind, but direct.

'The village is sorry for the way in which it has treated you. But it is partly your own fault. Why did you let it be thought that you were a wise woman?'

Keturah avoided a reply.

'I'll be upsides wi' 'um,' she muttered.

'Best tell the Rector everything, mother,' counselled her daughter, Rose.

There could be only one secret in Keturah's life, thought the Rector. He drew a bow at a venture.

'Where is your husband, Mrs. Morin?'

Keturah burst into tears.

'Swear, Rector, that if I tell 'ee, 'ee won't tell nobody ?'

'You know me, Keturah. I promise.'

'He's in Dartymoor prison ; he went away on one of his randies and took up wi' robbers and thieves. The judge put 'en away, but 'twere in another name. An' I was afeared that the neighbours would lay bare the awesome thing, so I've a-kept mysel' to mysel'. So I let it be thought. . . .'

'You're a brave woman, and Rose is a brave girl. I wish I could comfort you both. Perhaps I can a little. Rose, what is the misunderstanding between you and Joseph Samways ? A hard-working honest lad, he's drinking himself into a maze because he thinks you have forsaken him.'

Rose flushed painfully. Her mother answered for her.

'A drawlatcheten chap, always a-hangèn back an' a-hangèn back,' she said darkly.

'Tis me he've a-forsook, Rector,' said Rose bitterly. 'Asheämed of me, he were. Ever so lovèn, when we were on our lone, but, when anybody would go by, he would draw off and look t'other way as if he were but passèn' the time o' day. He'd a-heard the foolish stories about mother, you zee.'

The Rector persisted shrewdly.

'So you went about with Mr. Hubert Ansty just . . . to spite him, shall I say.'

'Mr. Ansty were kind to me—oh ! an' what you do zay be partly true, Rector. But Mr. Ansty be nought to me : it be Joe that my heart turns to, now an' evermore.'

And Rose put her face in her hands and cried.

'I am sure that you are a good maid, Rose. Cheer up, and it may all come right for you ever so soon. And don't harbour any dark thoughts, Mrs. Morin. The neighbours are only too anxious to show you that they are sorry. Forgive them, please ! Rose, please come to the Rectory at half-past three this afternoon without fail.'

The Rector bade farewell to Stiller Avium and paced slowly down the sunken lane to Stiller Florum. What a tangled skein, he reflected, and yet two more strands to unravel ! Well, plot was best met with counterplot, and at the thought of his counterplot he smiled.

So it came to pass that, when Rose Morin came to the Rectory at half-past three, she was greeted by the Reverend Cagliostro.

'Go and sit in the rose-arbour, my dear girl, and wait for me

there ! Take this ash-leaf and when the clock strikes four, say this rhyme. . . .'

'I know 'en, Rector,' said Rose blushing.

'Well, it's a little magic spell I will allow you to cast,' said the Rector laughing. 'Who knows . . . ?'

As the blue church clock struck four, up lumbered Joseph Samways. He stood sheepishly in front of the Rector.

'You're a stupid good-for-nothing chap. To think that you could believe those tales about Mrs. Morin ! You don't deserve the affection of a good, brave, hardworking and pretty girl such as Rose.'

'Doän't 'ee now, Rector,' implored Joseph, treading on his own feet in flustered anguish. 'Ernest Forsey has been tellèn I what a mean stunlock I be.'

After the fashion of the apostle Paul to his friend Theophilus, so the Rector addressed the absent Ernest.

'Oh ! most excellent Ernest !' thought the Rector.

'Please go straight to the rose-arbour and wait for me there !'

On the fourth stroke of the clock, Rose Morin was whispering to herself :

'The even ash-leaf in my hand,
The first I meet shall be my man.
The even ash-leaf in my glove,
The first I meet shall be my love.
The even ash-leaf in my bosom,
The first I meet shall be my husband.'

And when Joe Samways blundered his way beneath the covert of Petit Louis, Rose flung herself, laughing and sobbing into his arms. Charms do work, sometimes.

There remained but one more tangled strand. At six o'clock Mr. Hubert Ansty called upon the Rector.

'Do you remember reading Horace with me before you went up to Sandhurst ?' said the Rector wistfully.

'Yes, Rector, I remember some of it,' laughed Hubert.

'Perhaps you remember Horace's advice to his young friend, Xanthias Phoebeus.'

The young soldier flushed a little.

'Wasn't there something about rounded ankles ?' he put in hardly.

'*Teretesque suras*,' murmured the Rector. 'But it is the end

to which I would draw your attention. *Fuge suspicari*. . . . Don't suspect the kindly motives of an old gentleman who is slipping on into the sere and yellow leaf !'

' Nobody could ever suspect you, Rector,' said Hubert earnestly.

' Well, my boy, Rose Morin went off from here an hour ago with young Joe Samways. I think they were very happy.'

There was a little silence, while Hubert Ansty travelled ruefully back from the pleasant land of Cockaigne.

' I am sorry, Rector. I have been very foolish. I gave her a lift one day on the Bridport road, when it was raining. She seemed unhappy, so it went on : but it was only foolishness, nothing worse.'

' I know. Rose Morin is a good maid, and you are like your father, a man of honour. Please tell him everything and set his heart at ease.'

It was eight o'clock when from Lyme Regis Mr. Hamilton came back on lissome toe. He was decorously gay, and his pincenez sat askew on his high, eager nose.

' Here I am, Rector ; back once more to Stiller of the Flowers and Stiller of the Birds, where nothing ever happens and life pursues the even tenor of its way.'

But the Rector was watching the evening primroses, the low trailing yellow and the moon-white. Shortly they would open their blossoms to the night air.

' Do I quite agree with you ? ' said the Rector doubtfully.

But the curate was already at the end of the path.

' Oh ! Rector, such an excellent idea for a sermon, a sermon on neighbourly love. The problems I used to solve for my parishioners in Bermondsey ! Such abnegation, such true beauty of soul in that wilderness of bricks and mortar ! How would you define beauty, Rector ? '

Quiet pictures, alien from the stormy hearts of men, shone within the Rector's brain.

Left—right, left—right, back came Mr. Hamilton.

' And what do you think of my thesis, Rector ? '

' High noon in September, and Red Admirals floating over the Michaelmas daisies ! ' said the Rector.

' I don't quite understand ' He pondered. ' There is something in that,' admitted Mr. Hamilton.

L. SLINGSBY BETHELL.

SOME SHOPS I HAVE WORKED IN.

BY W. F. WATSON.

WONDERING how other people obtain their livelihood is a characteristic common to us all. Being naturally inquisitive—we were not so, progress would cease—most of us fall to conjecturing as to the nature of our neighbour's occupation.

I am reminded of a dear old gentleman whom I see nearly every morning on my way to work. Of medium height, inclined to be stout, affecting those Dundreary whiskers so beloved by our grandparents, he always wears a square box hat and a white cravat, ornate with a gold pin from which hangs a little safety chain, and he is never without one of those Gladstone bags which were so popular when that famous statesman was at the zenith of his fame, and when attaché cases were practically unknown except amongst diplomats. The one modern thing about him is his cigarette, and this he conveys to his mouth in a very old-fashioned silver tube. He appears to be in the world but not of it, and if, when I meet him, I close my eyes for a moment, I can imagine a Tracy Tupman, a Nathaniel Winkle, or a Mr. Wardle.

Where does such a man work? What are his surroundings? Is he employed in some musty old office which has remained unaltered since the days of Martin Chuzzlewit, or in a warehouse such as was occupied by the immortal Dombey and Son? Or has the old chap valiantly stuck to his Victorian dress and demeanour amidst rapidly changing environment? It is difficult to withstand the temptation to engage him in conversation for the purpose of satisfying one's curiosity.

Let two people, hitherto strangers, strike up a chance acquaintance—no matter the circumstances or place—and I dare swear that, having exhausted the subject which brought them together, they will drift into exchanging confidences concerning their work.

'Er! What is your work, by the way?'

'My work! Oh, I'm in a big merchant's office in the City. Costs clerk, y'know.'

'Is that so! Very interesting work, I should imagine.'

'Oh, well, not too bad. Bit monotonous at times. Are you in an office?'

'No. Wish I was. I'm in engineering—a mechanic.'

'An engineer, eh ! Well, now, that's funny. Do you know, I've always wished my old man had put me to engineering. It's just what I should like to be—a mechanic.'

'Ah, you'd soon get fed up with the dirt, dust, and grime, to say nothing about the cold and draughty shops we have to work in. It must be lovely to work in a nice clean warm office !'

'That sounds all right, but you take it from me, old man, the offices are not all what some of you mechanics think they are. Now take my office, for instance . . .' And there ensue graphic descriptions of the horrors of offices and the wickedness of workshops.

If Phyllis happens to bump into Doris whilst straphanging in the Tube, the odds are that the conversation will be as follows :

'Hullo, Doris, old thing ! Why, it must be *ages* since I saw you. How are you keeping ?'

'Not so bad, Phil. Had a touch of 'flu, y'know. Only lasted a week, though.'

'So glad you got over it quickly, Doris. Still with the Benson people, I suppose !'

'Yes, still there, worse luck ! Wish I could get a change. You still at Walker's ?'

'Still at Walker's ! Good gracious, no ; I left there long ago. I'm at Thompson's now. Been there some time.'

'Have you really, old bean ? I am surprised. What's it like ? Is the "old man" all right . . . ?' And so on to the journey's end.

Amongst men following a like occupation, the desire to know the conditions prevailing in the shop where the other man works is even more pronounced. No doubt this curiosity concerning the work of others is a very healthy sign, but it would be better still, perhaps, if we took as much interest in our own work as we do in that of our neighbour.

The number of shops I have worked in must be nearly fifty. I have worked on torpedo-boats in Thorneycroft's shipyard at Chiswick, and I have worked for a firm making tungsten wire for electric lamp filaments, finer than the hair of the head. From assisting to make London's buses, I went to a factory where cinema projectors were made. I have made parts for sewing-machines and phonographs, water meter clocks and tea weighing machines, optical and electrical instruments, lathes and aircraft guns. I have made tiny screws and spindles on a lathe which would almost go into one's overcoat pocket, and I have also machined large cylinders

weighing many hundredweights on a huge lathe which made me look like a veritable pygmy in comparison.

At one period I was the sole mechanic employed by a Russian inventor who had great hopes—not yet realised—of solving the perplexing problem of perpetual motion ; and I have been a more or less insignificant unit in a huge mass production establishment employing many thousands of men and women.

What a wealth of experience ! What a kaleidoscope of industrial life ! Each new shop I went into was a new world. Fresh faces, new companions ; different tools, different methods and management, a completely changed environment. I really cannot envy those ‘ faithful servants ’ we read so much about—who have had but one employer since they entered the industrial maelstrom. Despite the inconveniences sometimes occasioned by unemployment, I am quite certain that I have got far more out of life by not remaining too long with one master. ‘ A rolling stone gathers no moss, my son,’ my old father was wont to remind me each time I brought my tools home. ‘ That may be true, Dad,’ I once replied, ‘ but if a stone remains too long in one place, it is liable to become completely obscured by the moss it gathers.’

Some day, methinks, I will sit me down and write the whole story of my industrial peregrinations—from the first shop to the fiftieth—how I got each job, my experiences therein, and how I came to leave for woods fresh and pastures new. But for the purposes of this paper, I must confine myself to descriptions of some of the shops I have worked in.

Whenever a bus or tram conductor cancels my ticket, the sharp ring of the bell always reminds me of the first engineer’s shop I ever entered, for it was in the building where those punches are made that I received my baptism of factory life. Although barely fifteen years of age, it was by no means my first experience as a wage earner. At the tender age of ten I was humping commodities about after school hours for a local oilman in whose employ I remained about three years, following which I spent one year in a city warehouse and another period in the offices of a well-known firm of shipowners. But my career as a mechanic commenced when I secured employment as a shop-boy at the Bell Punch and Printing Co., Ltd., then situated in Tabernacle Street, Finsbury.

The duties consisted of sweeping the shop, keeping the machines clean, going out for beer and tea for the men, and fetching and carrying for all and sundry. When there was no shop work to be

done, I had to make small iron rivets. To-day, iron rivets are made by the million on automatic machines, and one can buy a handful for a copper or two, but in those distant days they were made by hand. The wire was first cut to the required length, after which each piece was placed in a jig made specially for the purpose, and the head formed by spreading the metal with a hammer. I was so small that I had to stand on a box to reach the vice, but I was a very proud little boy. I vividly recall the feeling of elation I experienced as I hammered away at the tiny pieces of iron, for all the world as though the structure of the universe depended upon those insignificant rivets. I was actually *making* things. I took a few home to show mother the product of my labour, and I have a shrewd suspicion that she was rather proud of her 'engineering' son !

Just as iron rivets and bell punches are associated with my entry into engineering, so are phonographs and sewing-machines linked up with my introduction to the centre lathe—still the 'key' machine of the industry, by the way. I was nearly seventeen when I secured employment in a sewing-machine factory in Clerkenwell. Although I had not previously done so, I told the manager that I could work a lathe, so I suppose I got the job under false pretences. Be that as it may, I was set to work at turning cams on an antiquated lathe, probably the same one that was used to bore the propellor of Noah's ark ! I knew nothing about tool grinding and setting, and was incapable of properly using measuring instruments ; consequently, I was in a frightful stew. The craftsmen in the shop would not help me a bit ; indeed, they wouldn't speak to me. In the first place, I was not an apprentice, and they resented a boy being placed on what they regarded as a skilled man's machine. Fortunately, the shop supervision was very lax. There was no charge hand or foreman, and the manager was far too busy to give much attention to what was going on in the shop. There were hundreds of these cams to be machined, and as I spoilt them I flung them under the lathe. This went on for some time, the heap of scrap growing and the number to be turned diminishing, and in fear and trembling I began to wonder what was going to happen when they were all transferred to the scrap-heap.

One day a foreman was engaged to take charge of the shop, and as was then customary he walked round introducing himself to the men. Placing his hand on my shoulder, he said, ' Well, my lad, and how are *you* getting on ? ' Native intuition told me that he was a good sort, so I made a clean breast of my predicament. ' Oh !

Is that what you've been up to,' he said with a laugh. ' Spoilt all that lot, have you ? Well, never mind, sonny. I dare say we'll be able to make some of them come in. Don't worry about it, my lad. I'll soon put you right.' And he did. It was one of the proudest moments of my life when, over twenty years later—I had by then acquired a reputation as a turner—I met old Bill Padgen and heartily thanked him for having taught me the rudiments of my craft.

It was an easy-going shop. Fifty-four hours was then the standard week, 6.30 A.M. being the starting-time. At eight o'clock we stopped half an hour for breakfast ; an hour for dinner at one o'clock, the working day ending at 5.30 P.M.

It was not usual for the manager to arrive at the works before 9 A.M., and more often than not the foreman did not put in an appearance until after breakfast. Now in those days mechanics made their own personal tools. There were two or three British manufacturers producing engineers' small tools, such as calipers, squares, dividers, surface gauges, and slide gauges, but they were not popular amongst the men. One could always 'find' the necessary material somewhere, and before breakfast was the recognised time for surreptitious tool-making. In some shops supervision was so lax that it was possible to make tools during any part of the day. As soon as the foreman was out of the way, out came the 'contract,' 'foreign order,' or 'job for the king' (workshop colloquialisms for such jobs) to be hurriedly hidden when he returned. And our activities were not confined to tools. Sets of fire-irons with ornamental handles, kitchen shovels, beautifully finished brass, gunmetal, or copper photo frames, nicely fashioned fire-dogs and mantelshelf ornaments, model engines for the lad, were some of the things we made. One man, it is said, made himself a complete lathe ; how he managed to get it out of the shop without being discovered is not on record, but such things were done in those days.

We were rarely sacked as soon as work fell slack. More than once a foreman has said to me, when I have gone to him for a job, 'I can't find anything for you just now, but something is sure to turn up to-morrow. Go and make something for yourself.'

The boom in the motor-car industry followed by the tightening, up of workshop conditions, increased the demand for small tools, and at the same time lessened the facilities for making them in the shop. Pawnbrokers would always loan good money on engineers' tools, because there was always a ready sale for them. Not being

able to appreciate the true value of such things, 'Uncle' was often 'taken in.' It was the practice in one shop to make dud tools specially for pawning purposes. Instead of being made of steel—as, of course, they should be—they were made of soft scrap iron, and badly made at that, but as they were nicely polished, 'Uncle' was easily deceived by the plausible pawnier.

It has always been a source of wonder to me that British manufacturers were not sufficiently enterprising to capture the engineers' small tool trade at the beginning of the present century. The motor-car industry was in its infancy, mass production was slowly making its way in this country, and the demand for measuring instruments and small tools practically illimitable, yet the only reliable micrometers, verniers, height gauges, and other small tools obtainable were of American make. Only in rules did Britain hold the field. Sheffield-made rules have always been the most popular because of their excellence. Twenty-five years ago the Americans flooded the country with tools. Agents were appointed everywhere, and there were few factories of note without a tool club, through which we could obtain any tools on the weekly instalment plan. Where no club existed it was easy to get them through the management, the instalments being deducted from the pay envelope. It was only when the war checked the importation of foreign goods that British manufacturers seriously entered the field, and they are now putting on the market small tools quite equal, if not superior, to anything produced by the American firms, but, unfortunately, Uncle Jonathan had had over twenty years' start.

A few days ago I saw displayed in a pawnbroker's shop-window a collection of home-made engineers' tools, and weird-looking, clumsy things some of them were to be sure. The men who fashioned those primitive tools, thought I, were the men who helped to build Britain's prestige throughout the world as a nation of engineers. In a tool dealer's shop-window not far away I saw a magnificent showcase containing beautifully finished precision tools, made in the States. Ah! I reflected. The same men who made and used the primitive tools I had seen in the pawnbroker's window probably helped to place these sensitive tools on the market, for it is a well-known fact that thirty years ago, at any rate, the principal mechanics in most American engineering workshops were Britishers. Such is the irony of life.

Another little shop I worked in was called the Bleak House Engineering Co., situated in a dark cellar in Took's Court, Chancery Lane, right in the midst of Dickensian-land. Here it was customary

for the men to cook their meals in the shop, and by eight o'clock in the morning, what with eggs and bacon, kippers and bloaters, all sizzling at once, the place was not unlike the kitchen of an eating-house. The walls would be decorated with numbers of the ubiquitous quart beer can (now a thing of the past), suspended on nails over improvised bunsen burners, containing the water for tea. The boss worked with us, sharing the comforts and discomforts, and we were quite a happy little family.

Different altogether was the next job I struck—a firm of lathe manufacturers in a North London suburb. No tea-making or 'grub' cooking at this establishment; in fact, we were not allowed to eat during working hours; but as the firm provided a well-equipped canteen, where we could get a good and properly cooked meal at a reasonable cost, there was not a lot to complain of.

In the early days of the motor industry there sprang up numerous small factories, some making a distinctive type of small car, others specialising in developing patents or making components. They had a hand-to-mouth existence, often having to spend the whole of Friday hunting around for the wherewithal to pay wages. We never knew whether there would be enough cash in the exchequer on pay-day to pay us out in full, and it was not unusual to have to wait an hour or so because the money was not forthcoming until the last moment. There have been cases where men have had to put up with part of their wages on pay-day and wait until the middle of the next week for the remainder, and I know of one instance where a friend of mine lent his boss ten pounds so that he could meet the wages bill. And we never knew when they were going 'broke.'

I worked for such a firm in 1902. There was plenty of work in the shop and things looked promising, so I decided to marry. There was no indication of anything amiss when I left for a brief honeymoon, but when I afterwards presented myself for work again I found the wheels idle—the firm had gone bankrupt during my absence!

I subsequently entered the service of another small motor firm in North-West London, the boss of which (whom we will call Mr. Brown) was a well-known character. I can see him now, marching about the shop coatless, swearing like the proverbial trooper at anyone who upset him. But he was a very decent chap to work for. Always paying a good wage, he invariably treated us as men. Passing through the shop one day Mr. Brown saw a lad 'choking' a hammer, i.e. holding the shaft too close to the head. Without a moment's hesitation he took the hammer, cut off half

the shaft, and handed it back to the lad, saying, 'There you are, sonny. The other bit was in the way.' Although the shaft was completely ruined, the boss thoroughly enjoyed the joke !

Mr. Brown was always in financial straits. I worked for him on three occasions—different companies each time. When his firm went 'broke' he quickly found some other people with money to burn, and another company was formed. On one occasion we all got the sack on the Friday. There was plenty of work about, but the exchequer had run completely dry. During the week-end, the resourceful Mr. Brown must have found another 'pigeon,' for we were all sent for on the following Wednesday. No job, however impossible, came amiss to Mr. Brown. I distinctly remember one job we had—a weird-looking contraption designed to prevent dust, smoke, noise, and smell. Thousands of pounds were spent on the thing, but I don't think it ever became a commercial proposition.

In all these small shops conditions were primitive. Tools were scarce, material difficult to obtain, and machine equipment entirely inadequate. Few kept a blacksmith—none a toolsmith—so we turners had to forge, harden, and temper our own tools. The shops were usually tumble-down places, draughty, dirty, and ill-lighted. One shop I spent a little time in was situated in a fearsome cellar in the heart of the City of London. To warm the shop in winter we made a 'devil' out of an old pail. When it was lighted the place was filled with such acrid fumes that we had to go outside to avoid being choked ! In the summer it was simply stifling. I really don't know how we stuck it.

Many of the big shops are badly heated. I spent three winters in a big factory in West London. As the cold weather approached the management started attending to the heating of the shop ; it was always in working order by June ! Next winter it was found to be useless, so other means were tried, with the same results. We had to have 'devils' each year !

It was in the District Railway Car Sheds that I first came into contact with modern American machines. It will be remembered that Mr. Yerkes, an American, carried through the electrification of the system. The whole of the plant and the leading men hailed from the States. I have a vivid recollection of the 'master mechanic' (a Yankee synonym for works manager), who was a typical American. Noticing a blacksmith working a piece of steel which, in the opinion of the 'master mechanic' was not hot enough, he said, 'Say, mister man ! There was only one goddam smith went to hell, and he was a cold iron smith !'

But whilst the plant was up to date, the tool equipment left much to be desired. I turned up the first pair of bogie wheels that ever went into those sheds, and the only tool steel I had was ordinary carbon cast steel! Engineers will know what that means. It took me all day Sunday to finish that pair of wheels; they can now be done in forty-five minutes.

It was here that one of the greatest workshop hoaxes was perpetrated. A rather unsophisticated young electrician conceived the idea of forming a works concert-party, to be called the Northern Concert Troupe, whereupon the wags inaugurated a rival body called the Southern Minstrel Party, a big Irishman, who appointed himself treasurer, taking the lead. For weeks the sole topic of the shop was the doings of the rival concert parties, the men being sedulously canvassed by protagonists from both. On paper the Southerns had the largest membership, but we all paid in the same half-crown. The Southerns finally decided to have an inaugural concert, for which purpose the hall of a local tavern was hired and admission tickets printed. Excitement ran very high as the night of the concert approached, the young electrician being the only man who failed to see the joke. Long before the affair was timed to start the hall was absolutely packed. The chairman opened the meeting by announcing its purpose, the number of members in the Southern Party, and by reading the 'balance-sheet.' After two or three songs had been sung there was an altercation at the door, and it was announced that a number of the Northern Troupe were trying to gain admission with a view to causing trouble. The burly treasurer made his way to the door and there were sounds of scuffling and fighting, which gradually died down and the concert proceeded. A quarter of an hour elapsed and, amid another uproar, the treasurer was carried in, swathed in bandages and apparently very ill. In a simulated voice he told his audience that he had been brutally attacked by minions of the Northern Troupe and robbed of the whole of the funds. Pandemonium ensued. The innocent victim of the hoax was accused of organising the opposition, and the 'wounded' treasurer made strenuous 'attempts' to get at him, being firmly held, of course, by his comrades. Thinking there was a riot, mine host had us all turned out forthwith, but it was a joyous evening, such as those who were present will never forget. I don't think that unsophisticated young electrician was ever disillusioned, for he tried to organise another such affair soon afterwards, but it was a dismal failure. Such interludes help to relieve the monotony of industrial life; they don't occur often enough, that's the trouble.

From the car sheds I went to a Thames shipyard, where the new Americanised system of management and production was being applied energetically and enthusiastically in all its naked brutality. Heretofore, if we managed to enter the main gate when the bell rang at 6 A.M. we were 'in,' but recording clocks were placed in each department, and if we failed to register our card within a minute of the hour, we lost half an hour's pay. The works manager and foremen had to conform to the factory hours. The machinery was started up a few minutes before time, and everybody was expected to be at work as soon as the hooter ceased. Each machine was provided with a chart indicating the feeds and speeds to be used on different metals, and feed-and-speed men were employed whose sole duty it was to walk round the shop and ensure that both man and machine were working to their utmost capacity—according to theory. We were not supposed to grind our own tools : they were ground in the tool-room on special machines. Neither were we allowed to go to the stores—the labourer was the man for that job. Indeed, we were not supposed to leave our machines under any pretext, except when nature demanded. And it was here that I received the greatest shock of my life. There was a special arrangement of open lavatories with a perambulating inspector to see that no malingerer spent more minutes there than the precise number set forth in a minatory placard. My soul was outraged—I took it as a personal insult, and it was as much as I could do to restrain myself from tearing the flaming thing down. Freeborn Britons, thought I, having to submit to such humiliation ! Disgraceful ! Degrading ! But I have since been forced to the conclusion that the employers had some justification for such drastic measures. Men *did* idle a lot of time away in the lavatories, reading, smoking, chatting, picking out winners, and what not. Modern industry demanded strict attention to output, and the only way to enforce it was to limit rigorously the uses of the 'library,' as it was called. Such measures, although still in force in some shops, are now happily unnecessary. Education has developed self-respect.

I suppose this rigorous application of the Taylor system was really the reaction to the old slipshod go-as-you-please methods previously prevailing ; in any case, it had no regard for the human element. There is individuality in grinding a tool. Whilst a man may be quite competent to grind his own tools to his entire satisfaction, no other man can grind my tools just as I want them ground. It soon became the practice to ' touch up ' our own tools. The time limits were all wrong, because variations in material, tools,

and human temperament were disregarded. The wise rate-fixer found it far more satisfactory to work in co-operation with the operator. The feed-and-speed men soon disappeared. Urged by the employers on the one hand, and bullied—sometimes assaulted—by the men on the other, the post was not an enviable one, and men could not be induced to take the job on. One feed-and-speed man I knew personally worried himself to an early grave ; another lost his reason.

Although tools and methods were thoroughly up to date in this shop, the machines were very old, and my lathe was the most antiquated, despite which I turned out some lovely work on it. Big triple expansion cylinders, searchlight projectors, crank-shafts, and very accurately bored drilling jigs were some of the jobs I successfully handled on that old crock—and I earned good money. The opposition of the men to modern methods was of no avail, and travelling from shop to shop one noticed the subtle changes : the standardisation of parts, the simplification of operations, and the departmentalisation of the factories. In a very short time we simply could not help producing at least one hundred per cent. more than we formerly did. It would be no exaggeration to say that the present-day turner on production does as much work in an hour as his predecessor of twenty-five years ago did in a day !

By 1914 mass production had got a firm grip on the motor industry. During the war all workshops were turned into munition factories, and all the resources of science and inventive genius were directed towards expediting production, and long before the armistice was declared we had almost reached perfection in output. During the momentary slump immediately following the outbreak of hostilities, scores of the small firms went out of business, but after the war there was a revival. Men who had made big money on munitions invested their savings, and ex-service men their gratuities, in buying up government surplus plant at little more than old iron prices, and opened up in business as engineers. Many, alas ! went under during the subsequent slump, but many weathered the storm and, to-day, in the midst of a mass production era, whilst financiers are discussing the advantages of mergers and amalgamations ; whilst the Balfour Committee, which has just issued its final report, are recommending the reconditioning of the industry, the writing off of watered capital, and reorganisation along co-operative lines—we find, right in the shadow of huge mass production factories, scores of small workshops struggling for existence. It is a remarkable industrial anomaly ; and not the least amazing feature

is that some of them not only pay their way, but are able to turn over a fair margin of profit. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is none the less true that most of these shops thrive on the failures of mass production. Mass production ceases to be economical when a very high degree of accuracy is required, and the number of articles needed comparatively small. Consequently, many big firms send their best work to other and smaller shops because it is cheaper. The reason is not far to seek. Overhead charges are reduced to a minimum. They are not burdened with rate fixers, bonus clerks, and work chasers, the managerial staff often being limited to one general clerk. In addition, by paying better wages, the small shop attracts the best mechanics—indeed, only first-class craftsmen could stay in such places—with the result that supervision is unnecessary and scrap all but eliminated.

I have recently been working in such a place—a miserable, dirty ramshackle little dust-hole, tucked away in a dirty side street off the Euston Road. But in spite of the disadvantages of bad plant, etc., we turned out work for some of the biggest car manufacturers in the country, mostly subcontracted from another trade firm, cheaper than they could do it in their own works. We found it more profitable to send one job to another firm, which meant that it passed through three different employers, each exacting toll in the shape of profits.

On the whole, there is a distinctive charm about the smaller shops, with all their dirt, draughts, bad lighting, and dangers. There is more adventure in having to exercise one's resourcefulness and ingenuity to get a job done. Personally, I am in my glory when I have to overcome difficulties in the shape of bad tools and equipment. The pay is usually better, supervision almost non-existent, and, instead of being a mere unit in a huge concern, one is looked upon as part of the firm.

Amalgamation and mergers may be quite all right and very necessary in the reorganisation of industry to meet modern demands. But as a working mechanic I fervently say—preserve for us the small individual workshop !

Since writing the above I have gone to work in yet another shop where conditions, methods, and management are quite different from anything I have hitherto experienced. It is a small shop, the total staff, exclusive of the office, being under thirty, but its

products—the firm makes patent fluid and gas filters—are exported to many parts of the world.

The work is in no way departmentalised. A man is given the job, drawing, and written instructions, and is expected to carry it right through from start to finish. In addition to being a good turner a man must be able to do his own drilling, shaping, planing, milling, and fitting ; and he must also understand how to mark out a job correctly. A high degree of accuracy is essential, and every one must be a first-class all-round mechanic to make good in such a shop. The only unskilled labour is the old chap who carries and fetches for us, and who keeps the shop well swept.

Wages are relatively high. ‘I would not employ a man who asked only for the bare rate,’ says the works manager. ‘Such a man is no use to me.’ He wants men who, knowing they are above the average, expect more than the minimum rate, and he is willing to pay them well. All holidays are paid for, including a week in August, and anyone away sick is allowed half-pay. These boons are properly appreciated only by those accustomed to attenuated pay envelopes usually attendant upon holidays and sickness.

Smoking at work is freely allowed. Morning and afternoon the machinery stops for a brief spell for refreshment, a lad being detailed to make tea and get anything we might need in the way of food, tobacco, soap, etc.

The works manager, who is also a director of the firm, addresses us all by Christian name (he called me ‘Bill’ the first day) and he daily walks round the shop to ask each man how he is progressing. It is really a ‘happy family’ shop, and whilst it would not be strictly true to say one looks forward to going to work, the ‘wish-I-hadn’t-to-go-in’ feeling each morning is not quite so pronounced.

Supervision and rigid discipline do not exist, for the obvious reason that they are not necessary. The foreman and the charge hand both work at the bench ; all the supervising they have to do is co-ordinating the work. Realising that they are enjoying conditions and privileges superior to anything obtainable in ordinary shops, the chaps need no other spur. As they so frequently remark whilst industriously getting on with the job: ‘There are not many shops where one can smoke all day, and where there is a break morning and afternoon for grub. And how many firms pay for all holidays . . . and sickness . . . ?’

Very, very few, more’s the pity.

TO OUR OWN LIPS.

‘This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.’

WINTON GRANGE was the residence—it might without impropriety have been termed the seat—of Frank Winton when he was at home, which was seldom. He was a big-game shot and explorer of stable repute and most erratic habits. His comings and goings were uncertain. His plans were never made in advance, at any rate not more in advance than essential, and very often not that. This ought to have been hard on Cecil, his younger brother, who was thus compelled to stay at home and look after the business and property.

It was not at all hard. Frank was a roamer, with the *wanderlust* in his veins, a fine specimen of the cultured English gentleman, a student, a botanist of irresponsible daring—it demands daring to go botanising in the Tropics—and generous withal to a rare degree. As elder brother he had the more money, but this he wanted to level down to Cecil’s, or level Cecil’s income up. It was not fair, he pronounced, that the young ‘un, *æt.* twenty-seven and less than three years his junior, should be staked down at home and do all the donkey-work whilst he wasted his substance in riotous living in swamps, jungles, deserts, and such-like health resorts.

This was a lot of good sympathy wasted. Cecil would have been quite unhappy without the donkey-work. As also he kept two steeds of his own, hunted twice a week in the season, and put in a couple of months every summer amongst the High Places of the earth in Switzerland or elsewhere, it is obvious that he was not exactly reduced to penury and that the donkey-work was not super-exacting. Frank’s offer was not accepted.

In fact the two brothers got on extremely well. Each lived the manner of life that fitted him, and their several manners of life fitted into each other almost as if they had been dovetailed.

There was one item which would not fit in—correspondence. Not infrequently Frank would come home in advance of his last letter, to find that he had just crossed one by Cecil replying to his

penultimate communication. This kind of thing is exasperating unless treated as a jest, as it was treated. In any case it is hard to keep in touch with a man who wanders about from M'Goro to N'Tagi, or names to that effect, because the post cannot be always reasonably relied on and an explorer is not bound by schedule at all. When, however, about two months after the dispatch of your letter to N'Tagi you get one from M'Goro to the effect that your man has changed his mind at the last moment and gone to M'Bongi, two thousand miles south, the difficulties of the position become unusual, even irritating. Consequently, one morning Cecil, on the receipt of a letter with the Bahia postmark when he was expecting one from Zanzibar, said things. He was used to reasonable variants, but when it came to swapping continents ! !

When he read the letter he said several other like words, though for a very different reason, and when he noted the date of the letter and the date of the postmark he said even more.

He had reason.

Having said his say, he ate his breakfast, reading his paper the while, as if nothing had happened. Next he motored down to his donkey-workshop and intimated to his chief of staff that he might be away for six weeks or two months, possibly three, with as much unconcern as if he were saying he was off for a week-end, and settled down to adjust the proper working of the engine with all the energy and concentration at his disposal. His second, wise man, did likewise. Not till everything was in working order did he speak of the matter uppermost in his mind.

'No bad news, I hope ?'

'A matter of life and death, I think,' replied Cecil. 'It may be a mare's nest, but I fancy it's the other. Good-bye, if I don't see you again.'

Whereafter he went back to the Grange and lunched with the same unconcern as he had breakfasted. It was studied unconcern. It took a good deal to rattle Cecil Winton, but he felt the need of keeping himself in hand. Next, with the same methodical concentration, he interviewed Frank's agent—a more or less perfunctory business this—in fact, in view of his annual two months' outing, almost a matter of routine—wrote a couple of letters to a couple of friends that he would probably not be able to come to the Alps that season and that in any case they had better count him out, and then packed. Not a very heavy business this either, despite the length of the journey in prospect. Switzerland is not identical

with the Tropics in the matter of climate and so most of his outfit would have to be purchased in town. There was also a most immediate distinction. In place of ropes, ice-axe, and climbing boots, he equipped himself with a sporting battery from Frank's extensive armoury, supplemented by an automatic.

'If it does turn out a mare's nest,' he said, half aloud, 'I may as well have a shot at Frank's game and try my hand at stalking. I shall probably put up everything within half a mile,' he concluded with a laugh.

It was the first time he had laughed that day.

Three hours later he was in his London Club, raking through the back numbers of *The Times*. Having found what he sought, he sent a special messenger to a certain Sir Owen Carnaby. After which he plunged back into *The Times* and continued his researches till 'so to bed' time. Next morning he called on Sir Owen as early as might be.

Sir Owen Carnaby, K.C.M.G., and a gross of other capitals, regarded Cecil steadily through the smoke of his after-breakfast pipe.

'There's trouble come this way,' was his reflection—a reflection he kept to himself. Meanwhile Cecil was apologising for taking up his valuable time.

'My time is entirely at your disposal,' observed Sir Owen. 'Yours is not at mine. You are against the clock and riding yourself hard held on the curb. What can I do for you ?'

Cecil was pleased. He liked straight talk. It argued well for the rest of the interview.

'Thanks !' he replied. 'The fact is, Sir Owen, I want to come and ask you about a fellow called Raymond Prim. He gave a lecture to the R.G.S. not long ago, and you were in the chair.'

Sir Owen inclined his head in acquiescence and smiled. 'A fellow called Raymond Prim ' promised easy converse.

'You know, I suppose,' he said, 'that his real name is Ramon Prim, that he is a Spaniard—'

Cecil held up his hand.

'Forgive me,' he interrupted. 'I ought to have told you to start with. I know a good deal about Raymond Prim—that he is a wonderful chap, a sort of Admirable Crichton—without the Admirable, that he was up at Oxford and would probably have taken high honours besides pretty nearly sweeping the athletic board at Queen's had he not been sent down. I know more about

that last event than most. I know, too, that he walked the hospitals, that a brilliant career seemed assured, but for some reason he did not take out his diploma. I know all that.' Sir Owen was checking off the points on his fingers. ' What I want to know is whether he saw my brother at that lecture and also whether the lecture itself evoked any invidious—no, that's hardly the word, any unpleasant, you know what I mean, criticism.'

' I know exactly what you mean,' assented Sir Owen. ' But let's take things in order. Yes. Prim and your brother dined together that evening and honoured me with an invitation to join them. Prim was almost effusive in his friendly attitude towards your brother. You look alarmed.'

' I am,' said Cecil. ' Please go on.'

Sir Owen, like a wise man, went right on.

' It certainly seemed a bit overdone. Anyhow, it ended with some sort of understanding that your brother should look him up at his *hacienda* at some time or other to be settled later.'

' And this place, can you tell me where it is ? ' demanded Cecil, eagerly.

' Certainly. Latitude and longitude to a second, besides how to find it. Moreover, I have a photograph of it somewhere. He gave me one. Wait half a minute.'

After the normal 'half-minute' interval, elaborated by geographical instructions, Sir Owen succeeded in digging out the photograph. The *hacienda* looked more like a bungalow, with a long shed on one side of it—' His laboratory,' Sir Owen explained. It was situate on a steep knoll or mound. Behind rose a dark cliff and on either side was timber. Cecil examined it curiously.

' What made him give it you, I wonder ? ' he asked at length.

' Confidence trick, I fancy,' returned Sir Owen, bluntly, ' but I am showing it you to help you to locate it. It is quite a small place, and the river in front is big, the Orinoco in fact.'

' Thanks very much. It is very good of you. Yes. I don't think there's anything more on that point. And now, about the other, Sir Owen. The lecture.'

' You will have to go to Mengs about that. I have no opinion to offer on the subject and, if I had, it would be worth nothing. Mengs is the man who raised the question. He even tried to institute an inquiry but it came to nothing. In fact, there was no one to question.'

' Raymond Prim had left England ? '

'Exactly, and Mengs is mad about it. What makes him madder is that some of his colleagues regard him as a crank. If he knows you are out for Raymond Prim's scalp, he'll give you a quick audience even if he has a barrack-full of patients waiting. I'll give you a note to him and ring him up into the bargain.'

Within an hour Cecil Winton was interviewing Sir Augustus Mengs, normally as hard to reach as a Permanent Under Secretary. The remainder of the day was one feverish rush to get in his equipment in time to catch the mail to catch the liner sailing next day for America. This is how Sir Augustus had concluded the interview :

'I keep an open mind on vivisection, but some of that man's results were obtained by illegitimate means. I am as confident of that as that I sit here. I don't mean what you mean. I mean—unspeakably illegitimate. He may be a genius but he is inhuman.' He paused, then ended deliberately, 'possessed of a devil'; and this was the man who had pressed Frank to come and pay him a visit, a visit in what was, in fact, No Man's Land—and who hated Frank.

Day in and day out, whilst the liner was cutting her way westward, all that he knew of Raymond Prim's life kept recurring to Cecil with 'damnable iteration' and most sinister suggestion. Raymond Prim had, as he had said, come up to Oxford, with the reputation of being something of a Crichton. He had been cock all-round athlete of the Public Schools, and that he would achieve the not infrequent honour of a Double Blue (Cricket and Rugby) was almost a certainty, bar accidents. It was on the running-path, however, that he excelled. So much so that, when one enthusiast wanted to take odds that he would carry off all the cinder-track events at Queen's whilst he was 'up,' from the hundred yards to the mile, the odds offered were not attractive. Again, he was a brilliant Classic, quite reasonably sure of a First *Lit. Hum.*, but yet again his *forte* was unquestionably 'Stinks.' Nevertheless he was not popular. Nobody really liked him. Young fellows can detect instinctively the cloven hoof which mature men only find out. In Prim's case it was a strain of ferocity, most un-English, of real cruelty. One day, in his second year, it flashed out. His scout, who had been growing increasingly lazy and inefficient, waxed insolent, relying on the ægis of the College authorities. He presumed too far. Raymond Prim shut the door.

The man deserved a hiding : he had asked for it, but Prim dealt with him with a calculated brutality that frightened him into

screaming. The screams attracted Frank Winton—who intervened. Frank was not a marvel of agility and grace, but he possessed a finishing punch which concluded the interview inside fifteen seconds.

Prim, at that time at least, was sufficiently a sportsman to bear no malice for the intervention. Also he paid the scout a very handsome compensation as hush-money, and the episode seemed closed.

It was not. Somehow the matter got to the ears of the Dean and Provost. Prim was sent for and questioned. Winton was sent for and questioned. The scout was sent for and sacked, but Prim was sent down. The intention was that he should only stay down till the end of the term, but unhappily he so comported himself that the authorities had really no option but extreme measures. Raymond Prim went down for good in a temper calculated to make the Devil chuckle.

It was not the chastisement Frank had administered. As has been said, he bore no malice in that respect. It was that all his laudable ambitions had been blown away like dust; and who was to blame? Certainly not Prim, of course. Assuredly not the scout. Winton then. The motive? Jealousy. Frank Winton was something of an athlete and scholar too. As a matter of fact it was the scout, who had pocketed the hush-money and then sneaked—and got sacked.

Of course Cecil knew all about the scout incident. Frank was pretty mad at the College losing so bright a star, owing to the said star being a blithering idiot. Still neither of the brothers, certainly not Cecil, gave the matter another thought till the University Rugby match two seasons later. Frank was playing full-back and Cecil, then a freshman, had by patience and endurance secured himself a front seat. Next to him a watchful providence planted Raymond Prim.

All at once—the Oxford three-quarters were indulging in the usual preliminary passing canter—Cecil heard a voice beside him.

'See that big lump there? That's Winton, the man who ruined my career at Oxford, and if I don't pay him back full measure and running over my name is not Raymond Prim.'

Cecil looked round. He said nothing, but he made a special mental photograph of the man. It was not a difficult face to remember. Raymond Prim was strikingly handsome. This, however was not the striking point at the moment. It was the unhallowed malignity which glittered in the eyes. Those eyes,

that malignity followed Frank Winton up and down the field throughout the match. Cecil told Frank of the incident afterwards, whereat Frank shrugged his shoulders and said, 'Let him try it on and see what he gets !' whereafter Cecil felt at ease.

He was not left at ease. The watchful providence took care of that. Time and again when he woke at night he seemed to see that malevolent face, a thing of darkness in the dark. It began to get on Cecil's nerves, and they were as tough as his muscles. He made inquiries about Prim. The man was not hard to locate. He played fly-half for the United Hospitals and one or two supervise papers rated the selection committee for not giving him a try in the English team. Cecil also played Rugby and so had little difficulty in getting into touch with folk who knew him. What he learned told him that Prim was a man both admired and disliked, a most dangerous combination. Cecil determined to keep an eye on him.

He did, but not for long. Suddenly Prim disappeared without explanation. Kindly rumour of course certified that the cause was disgraceful or criminal or both. As a matter of fact Prim had gone over to Paris to study. He had no use for a career : he had money enough for two or three careers—but he did want to excel. For a time Cecil lost sight of him. The watchful providence did not.

It was a French Professor who said of Prim :

' That man, he is like a panther. One gazes on him and admires. One exclaims at the symmetry, the power, the poetry of motion, but, my friend, one prefers to do so from the other side of the bars, and one is wise.'

It was even so. Thus was Raymond Prim admired ; thus was he feared ; thus did he erect between himself and his fellow-men a barrier which few essayed to pass. Although in Paris, in Madrid, and later in London he was welcomed, even courted, when he went home to his rooms he was alone in the world—save for seven other devils always on the look out for such quarters. He was a hermit in great cities. It is small wonder that he preferred to be a hermit in the wilds.

He disappeared and forthwith became a celebrity. He had brains, he had money, he had erudition, and withal he had a fierce zeal, almost a lust, for the knowledge he sought to acquire. His researches took him into tropical swamps and forests, very habitations of death, yet no harm befell him. Frank was naturally much interested in the man and consequently Cecil's memory was time

and again getting jolted, but it was not until the occasion of the lecture to the Royal Geographical Society that it turned in its sleep and gave heed to the watchful reminder that Raymond Prim was a creature that existed and a creature to be feared. Then came Frank's dated letter with the belated postmark. That letter ought to have come to hand a month earlier; the date showed that. That letter was meant to have come to hand a month earlier; the contents showed that. That letter had been delayed, but not in the post; the postmark showed that.

William Harris, Deputy Assistant Vice-Consul, Political Representative of His Most Excellent Majesty of Great Britain, etc., at Okoda Customs Station, Stew Pan and Hell-on-earth generally, on the Orinoco, gazed out into the sweltering heat, then at the chit in his hand, then at the heat again, and said—something. The chit had been brought by a *péon* and contained a request that he would be so very kind as to take charge of 'a pleasure-boat' for a few days, possibly less, as its owner might be expected any hour. Pleasure-boat—at Okoda! William Harris strode down to the pier, not that there was any hurry, but because the shorter the exposure to the pelting sunbeams, the less the chance of sunstroke. On the frowsy pier, jetty, or quay which projected into the repulsive slush of the water, lay a few drowsy, frowsy Indians, and beyond was a frowsy steamboat with an even frowsier captain seated under an awning to match. The only workmanlike thing in sight was a small motor-launch attached to the steamer.

Harris regarded the awning with suspicion and conducted conversation from under a relatively healthy tree at a range of some ten uninhabited yards. Eventually two frowsy hands made fast the launch to the pier and obtained from Harris a chit that he had received it, apparently in good condition. Whereafter the steamer dropped down stream and Harris, finding the shade of the tree one or two degrees cooler than his quarters, laid himself down and drowsed, half asleep, half awake.

The awake part of him started trying to calculate by ear the progress the steamer was making down stream, but as verification of this calculation entailed standing up, interest lapsed almost from the start. Soon, however, a really startling phenomenon occurred—the further the steamer got away, the louder the pulsations of her engines, so much so that at length Harris sat up and took notice. The explanation of the phenomenon was apparent and close at hand. Another steamer, much better found than the former, was coming

up stream and evidently making for Okoda. Another quarter of an hour and it was keeping its place opposite the pier whilst a boat put off.

The boat contained some luggage, two half-caste river-hands, and what was evidently an Englishman and a Sahib at that. Harris took courage and spoke.

'Your boat's come to hand all right. You were not long after it.' To which came the answer :

'Thanks very much. Can you tell me if there's anywhere in this——' He hunted for a word to describe Okoda. Before he could find it, Harris had replied.

'If you stay anywhere but with me, there'll be trouble. Meanwhile, come into the shade whilst I have your traps ported up to my quarters. Now, what can I do for you ?'

Money may be dirt and dross, and altogether despicable, but it has its uses. Cecil Winton had come by land, ocean, air, and river, and, with the hire of the launch, it had left nothing to play with out of a thousand pounds, but he had made his journey in record time, and was within striking distance of his objective, all which could not have been accomplished without the sinews of war. He was not likely to slack at his journey's end. He did not. No sooner was he comfortably seated in Harris's quarters than he told him why he had come and his reasons right away from the beginning up to the time of his leaving England, concluding with a request, which was very much in the nature of a demand, to be told how to get to Raymond Prim's *hacienda* with the same expedition as he had reached Okoda.

Harris listened with acute interest.

'It's a risky business,' he began, 'and requires thinking out. Fortunately you can't go till to-morrow——'

Cecil rose.

'I shall start,' he began.

'Sit down, man,' said Harris sharply, 'and keep yourself in hand. You can't be off to-day for half a dozen reasons, one of which is good enough. You won't get there till about sunset at earliest, and as there is no twilight in these latitudes, that would not help much.'

Cecil gave a nod, which assented to the reasoning, and pursed his lips in a manner that showed he meant to disregard it. Harris took no notice.

'Even if you did get there on the post,' he continued, 'that

would not help either. I have seen the place. From the landing—he has a landing-stage, boat-house, and all that—an open track leads up to the *hacienda*, but the jungle comes in close on either side, and that is about as unhealthy a neighbourhood just before or after sunset as can be imagined.'

Cecil growled a sulky assent. He was beginning to realise.

'Besides, setting aside the chance of being stalked by a jaguar or treading on a snake, there is the risk of a bullet, a perfectly justifiable bullet, mind you, from the proprietor, the most dangerous wild beast of all.'

'You've met him, then ?'

'Rather. More than once. Over in the Old Country and at our tin-pot little Governor's tin-pot shack up on the hill there. A most agreeable chap who pays me the compliment of detesting me, but—not an Indian will go near the place. Why? Mothers scare their babies with his name—the Indian mothers really do believe he roasts and eats children. No. I forgot. It's his attendant who eats them, a huge ape-like bogey. Of course that's all skittles, but there is something behind it all, I am convinced. I can somehow understand them, too.'

'How do you mean ?'

'Hum! Let me see. You've seen a few dogs in your time, "mongrel, puppy, whelp and hound, and curs of low degree," which yap and squabble and snap? Quite! Now sometimes, not often, you see a dog, just like other dogs to all appearance, but none of them so much as think of yapping at him. Occasionally an uneducated stranger does, and he just stops, lifts his lip and the stranger quits. Prim suggests to me something of that kind of animal, something perhaps more of a snake—something perhaps more of—of—'

'Of a devil,' concluded Cecil, 'of the Corsair type,

"There was a laughing devil in his sneer
That roused emotions both of hate and fear"

sort. Anything else ?'

'Yes. Excuse my saying so, but of course it must have occurred to you. Don't you think Prim is rather more than likely to regard your uninvited call as an impertinence, to say the least, something, in fact, very like an insult?'

Cecil's face showed that he had never so much as considered that side of the question. The realisation dismayed him. On the

news that his brother was staying, or intending to stay, with a man whom he happened to dislike and distrust, he had come pounding half-way round the world at express speed to go up to that man's house without notice and without invitation, to ask him what he meant by it. For a moment, a very long moment, he was gravelled. Then he said :

'The letter. The date will show when it was written. I have not heard since and that means a long time. What more natural than that in my anxiety I should apply to the only man who could give me information as to Frank's whereabouts ? True it is that old Frank has often kept me waiting much longer, but that I keep to myself. Stay a bit. That won't do. Prim might ask me why I did not cable.'

'Cable to whom ?' asked Harris. 'Raymond Prim, Somewhere on the Orinoco ? No. The letter is quite a good card. It is, at best, only an excuse and Prim will recognise it as such, but at any rate it will save your face.'

He shrugged his shoulders and was silent. At length Cecil, more for the sake of saying something than anything else, asked : 'But surely Prim has some means of communication with the outer world ?'

'Oh yes, he has a wireless all right wherewith he taps out messages, quite a lot sometimes. In code of course. I wish I had the key,' he ended, half to himself. 'I might lay the beggar by the heels then.'

Cecil looked up quickly and then away even more rapidly. Harris had coloured and bitten his lip impatiently. He had said something out loud which ought to have been under his breath. Cecil, wise man, had, of course, not caught a syllable. Whereafter they discoursed on cricket, alligators, trout-fishing, 'shoes and ships and sealing-wax,' anything and everything in fact except Raymond Prim, till a brain-wave washed them down to the pier to see whether the launch was in working order. Sundry games of picquet beguiled the evening. Both played vilely, but it kept their minds off the matter that mattered.

Next morning, very early, Harris waved a cheery farewell to Cecil as he shot away up stream. Then he turned homewards with clouded brow.

'I don't like it,' he declared to the morning mist. 'I don't like it, not a little bit.' Then he stopped in great perturbation. 'What if that delayed letter were a trap—some devilish scheme to lure

him out here ! Fool that I—yet, after all, what was there to do ? What—can—be—done ? '

He repeated the question once and again as he lagged away from the pier, then suddenly straightened up and exclaimed 'Got it !' That morning responsible Okoda, Governor and all, was made to understand that its eternal motto '*mañana*,' 'Never do-to-day what can be postponed,' was cancelled, deleted, off the map.

Meanwhile Cecil, with no very definite idea as to what was to be done but quite determined to do it, was driving the launch up stream. In due course he sighted his quest, swung round, steered straight for the landing-stage, jumped on to it and made fast his craft, just as if he had been a familiar and expected guest. Then he took a look round.

All was just as Harris had described. There were the landing-stage, the boat-house—a large and handsome one—the natural avenue with forest and jungle impinging on either side. Nay, not quite all. At the foot of the landing-stage was a large white board with characters on it. It looked like a notice-board. In fact it was one. This is how it read :

‘ Those who land here do so at their own risk.
The risk is great.’

This encouraging welcome was written in Spanish, French, English, and German.

‘ To choke off the whole crowd,’ commented Cecil. ‘ A safeguard advertisement that this firm does not guarantee goods against damage in transport.’

With that he looked to his rifle, made sure that his automatic was handy, and strode forward, keeping a wary eye the while on either side.

The avenue appeared to lead right up to the *hacienda* at an easy unbroken gradient. All at once, however, it came to an unexpected dip, sloping easily on his side to a level bottom and rising even more gradually on the other. Across the foot of it ran a deer-fence which seemed to terminate where it reached the timber.

A glance showed Cecil there was no gateway and a moment's reflection decided him not to attempt to turn the obstruction. It remained to climb it. This was not quite easy, as the top section was unpleasantly whippy, which made it difficult to retain one's balance and avoid being thrown off on one side or the other, the tendency being towards the downhill side, to wit, that furthest

from the river. It held up Cecil for quite a minute. Then, chancing to look down, he saw something which checked him finally.

Through the bright green turf on the far side of the rail rose a bubble of air. This could have but one meaning, one only. A steady examination confirmed its significance. Along the far side of the fence was a band of quickmire, some ten feet across. Yes, and the fence! A barrier! A safeguard! Yes, but why tilted inwards, and why the whippy top? Cecil started to descend by the way he came, but his legs shook so he had to cling hard with his hands.

His descent was arrested by a sharp challenge in Spanish.

'Stop where you are, you dog, or I fire.'

He looked up and saw, not twenty yards distant, with a gun in his hand, Raymond Prim himself.

Cecil's thoughts connected up quickly. He recognised that his life was in Prim's hands, more, that it was in danger. He also recognised that Prim could not have come down from the *hacienda* whilst he was at the fence without being observed, that Prim, in fact, must have been watching him all the time. He replied coolly.

'If you would kindly speak polite English, Mr. Prim, instead of offensive Spanish, it would be better, and'—descending a step—'I should be glad to know why you did not warn me there was a quickmire on your side of the fence.'

This carrying the war into the enemy's camp rattled Prim.

'Why the blazes should I?' he blustered. 'I put up notices to warn people of their risk. I put up a railing to prevent them walking into that mire and—keep your hands off that rifle, or I fire.'

'That kind of thing cuts no ice,' returned Cecil, picking up his piece and tucking it under his arm. 'Moreover, it is no reply to my question. Why did you not warn me?'

Prim lowered his gun and something like a smile twinkled through the arrogant anger of his eyes.

'Well, you've got some pluck whoever you are,' he said. 'May I ask your name?'

'Certainly. Cecil Winton, Frank Winton's brother.'

Raymond Prim's brow grew dark.

'Indeed,' he snarled. 'Indeed! and does it not occur to you—No. Wait a bit. I'll come round. There's a side track some twenty yards down. I shall have something to say to you.'

Cecil walked back, humming to himself. He was playing with

death, and the man who says he can do that without experiencing fear in a degree lies, but to show fear would have been death.

A minute later Prim stepped out of the jungle. To Cecil's relief he did not offer his hand. Indeed, his attitude was menacing.

'And now, Mr. Winton,' he said, 'it is my turn to ask for an explanation. May I ask to what I am indebted for the honour of this visit ?'

Cecil had rehearsed the scene and had Prim at a disadvantage. There was no challenging his explanation. It was perfectly natural and easy. Prim, however, took it ill-temperedly.

'It certainly sounds plausible——'

'Plausible !' broke in Cecil. He fancied he had the upper hand, and meant to keep it.

'I beg your pardon. I should have used another word. By the way, that is your launch, I presume, moored to the stage. Tight little craft. You seem to have brought no luggage with you ?'

'No. I left it at Okoda.'

'Okoda !' There was that in Prim's tone, anger, with perhaps a shade of alarm, which startled Cecil. Prim had himself in hand almost as quick as eye could glance—almost.

'Okoda !' repeated Prim. 'Then of course you saw Harris there. Smart chap that. I can't think what Government is doing wasting a man like that in that unhallowed piggery.'

Cecil began to wonder, too, what Harris was doing at a place like Okoda. That slip of his about laying Prim by the heels assumed significance.

'Oh, we didn't talk shop,' he replied. 'But permit me to observe, Mr. Prim, that I came here to find out about my brother, not to answer questions about myself.'

'And permit me to observe that before I accepted you as Mr. Cecil Winton I thought it well to ask a few questions. Your brother is up at the *hacienda*,' he concluded with dignity, 'and, if you follow me, I will take you to him.'

He turned up a narrow side track. At its entrance Cecil dropped his handkerchief—why, he did not quite know. It came to him to do so. Prim went straight on and by an iron bridge over the perilous mire.

'Belt of this runs right across the spit on which my house is situated. A kind of military wet ditch with a vengeance.'

Cecil made no answer, and they walked on in silence till, as they approached the *hacienda*, Prim said :

'Your brother is lying down. Only a touch of fever. Nothing to worry about. Your coming will set him all right. Here we are. Just leave your rifle in the hall. He's in that room. I'll break the sad news,' he ended with a smile, crossing the hall and flinging open a door. 'Winton, old man, here's your brother, Cecil.'

Cecil stepped past him and came to a dead stop, shocked, shocked. There were the same massive frame, the same strong face; but the eyes—the eyes so worn, so haunted, and, as they recognised Cecil, into them crept an expression of fear.

'Cecil,' he whispered. 'You here? You here?'

'Of course I am, old boy. Why, what—Ah!'

Something had gripped him from behind, something which felt like hands, but of an incredible power, power that paralysed into helplessness. At the same time he could hear Prim saying:

'Really, Mr. Cecil, it is such bad form to bring an automatic into a gentleman's house. I will relieve—Frank Winton, if you stir I will tell Cincha to break your brother's arm in half a dozen places between his wrist and elbow. That's better.'

He made a sign and Cecil felt his arms released. They were quite useless. The blood was oozing under the nails. Then Prim said:

'Look round, Mr. Cecil. A rather remarkable specimen of humanity.'

Cecil looked round. It was a remarkable specimen. An Indian and a giant. He was not quite so tall as Cecil but his chest must have been fifty inches at least and his wrists were as thick as an ordinary man's forearm. All the American Indians are of the Yellow Race, but Cecil could scarcely believe that their features could so nearly resemble the Chinese. Meanwhile Prim, speaking as composedly as if delivering a lecture, continued:

'He is one of a little known and very remarkable tribe. They are largely arboreal in their habits and almost as much at home in the branches as on the ground. I should not be surprised if the conception of Tarzan originated from them. Their strength, as you may have noticed, Mr. Cecil, is as the strength of ten. They are cannibals and are reputed untameable. This is not so. Cincha there was seized by a large alligator—you can see the toothmarks on his thigh—and was being dragged into deep water, when I shot the brute. He has been my devoted henchman ever since.'

'Now for yourselves. Frank Winton wrecked my career at Oxford.' He raised his hand. 'Silence! I say it was so, and

mine is the word that counts. I always balance an account of that kind—and something over. I got Frank Winton here and endeavoured to break his spirit by various means. I will spare you details. In fact there is no time. This week was his last chance. If he still held out, well, his adventurous spirit would take him in search of Cincha's tribe—he indicated the great savage—'in spite of my attempts to dissuade him, and he would not return. Nothing more natural. Quite in accord with his record. So much for Frank Winton.

'Now for you, Cecil Winton. That letter I had delayed was intended to bring you here. I knew of your resolution, your courage, your tenacity. I knew that if your brother disappeared after being with me you would track me down and demand particulars, so I arranged that that should happen at a time convenient to me. It might, for instance, have been infernally awkward had you done so in Europe, where I have, say, not many friends, and where people might ask and press unpleasant questions. I did not expect you for a fortnight at least, in which case either your brother would have been on the terms I desired with me or have departed on his last expedition. If so, you would of course have gone in search of him, and whether you came back or not, I should not have cared a snap of the fingers. As it is, by some miscalculation on my part or some marvellous travelling, you have compromised everything. Not only so, but you have been at Okoda and seen Harris. That places me in a position of great difficulty and no little peril. In fact I am confident that he will devise some infernal scheme to be on my trail before the day is out. Indeed so great is the danger that you must both disappear within the next few hours. The mire will serve for you, Mr. Cecil, with your gun leaning against the railings and your hat artistically near at hand—and a warning notice, obviously disregarded by you, conspicuous on the rails. Frank will join you, but not until you have both paid me in full for this. Now Cincha.'

He gave a short, unintelligible command, whereat the savage sprang on Frank and held and pinioned him as if he had been a child. Cecil was impotent to intervene. His arms were helpless as a bran doll's. Prim restrained him quite easily, laughing the while.

'Come! Come!' he jeered. 'This will never do. Why, you won't be able to put up a show, and I mean to give you both a chance—an outside chance it is true. Massage will restore you. Will you kindly strip?'

Cecil complied, and for the next twenty minutes Prim's fingers played over his crushed arms and tired body. It was wonderful, a soothing tonic, bringing back rest and vigour. Then Prim ceased.

'We will now participate in an experiment in blood transfusion which may be of great interest and even value to mankind. Put on these.'

'These' consisted of his shoes, socks, and linen drawers.

'It is going to be an athletic contest,' Prim explained. 'The race will be to the swift. Cincha will conduct you.'

He left the room and Cecil followed under escort down a passage and so into a long low room, lined with sinks, shelves, and what-not, half laboratory, half lecture-hall, save that the floor was bare of benches. In place was an operating table, spotless, flawless, smooth as glass. Close to it was a large wicker case, not unlike an ordinary pool-basket in shape.

At the end was a kind of dais, fenced off from the room by a roll of wire netting. There were three chairs there. In the central chair was Frank, pinioned, with Prim on his right. Cincha took the third seat. Cecil noticed a gun leaning against the wall beside Prim and wondered why. Its significance was soon made clear. Prim was speaking.

'The conditions are extremely simple. In that basket is a fer-de-lance, which, as you doubtless know, is a very vicious and active serpent. It goes for man on sight and its bite is fatal. In two minutes'—taking out his watch—'I will call "time." You will then take the basket, empty out the snake unhurt, and throw the basket away. If within the following five minutes you can avoid being struck by any means, I will let you and your brother go free conditionally on an absolutely unconditional promise of silence. If, however, the snake gets home, I will at once shoot it, and the experiment will proceed. The effect of the attenuated venom on your brother may be of extreme value to science. Time!'

For the past few seconds Cecil's thoughts had been far away, even as far as Regent's Park. There flashed into his memory a visit to the Reptile House at the Zoo with a scientific friend and of one sentence—just one. 'So you see that a snake on glass is rather more helpless than a cow on ice.' Just that one sentence, with insistent reiteration. At the word 'Time,' he picked up the basket and decanted the serpent on to the operating table. There

it lay, the whole six feet of it, helpless and harmless as a stuffed specimen.

Cecil was about to toss the basket on to the dais with a sarcasm that he could wait five minutes and more when he realised he had not five seconds. Prim and the savage were on their feet and in the act of springing to the ground. Instantly Cecil, with one sharp heave, upset the table, projecting its burden at their very feet as they touched the floor. Then, with a feint and a swerve, he dashed for the platform. Neither Prim nor savage noticed either feint or swerve. They made a convulsive effort to escape the flashing death and Prim tripped and came down right in its path. Instantly it struck right and left, burying its fangs in Prim's throat, and a second later Cincha was struck in foot and ankle. With lightning swiftness the giant gripped the snake and tore it asunder, not before he was bitten again in arm and stomach. Yet with death in his veins he turned and poised for a last carnival of vengeance. Even as he turned, Cecil snatched up Prim's gun and blew his face into the back of his head.

There was no need for haste. Raymond Prim was clawing at the floor; the fangs had penetrated to his tongue and suffocation was killing the man quicker than the venom. There was no need for haste, yet Cecil worked with furious speed. Behind Prim's chair was a tray of surgical instruments and appliances for the devil's work he had to hand. A couple of slashes set Frank free and the two bolted along the passage and into the main building, to be arrested by a sharp challenge and an end-on view of an automatic. Then came, in Harris' voice: 'Thank heaven! It's Winton.' Then, all in a breath, 'I'm very thankful to see you—and you too. I take it you are Frank Winton. Where's Raymond Prim?'

'Dead, or next door to it,' replied Frank, with shining eyes. 'Bitten in the throat by a fer-de-lance not five minutes ago.'

'And,' added Cecil, 'that baby-eating ogre was no myth. He's dead too. I have just blown half his head away.'

'Good!' commented Harris. 'He will feature as the notorious criminal—'

'Notorious criminal?' from both.

'Never mind. That will do later. You've both been through it—specially you,' to Frank. 'All the same it's quite clear Prim did not starve you.'

'Rather not. He kept a topping table. He has regular cold

storage cellars——' It was not the Frank Winton of five minutes ago who was speaking, nor indeed of normal life, but an excited, almost hysterical man.

' That's all right ! ' interrupted Harris, shortly. ' Do you think you can rake out a bottle of the best and bring it to the dining-room ? Good ! '

Then, as Frank left, he went on to Cecil.

' That brother of yours will need nursing. He's been through hell and the reaction may be serious. Meantime those are your clothes, I suppose,' pointing to the floor by the couch on which Cecil had been massaged. ' Better get into them, and please don't talk ! '

Cecil obeyed wonderingly. Harris was quite unconsciously speaking like a man accustomed to give orders and to be obeyed. He was at the moment standing erect, with his hands in his pockets, looking at nothing.

' Let me see. That cannibal. We can drop him in the quickmire. "Sink and leave no sign !" That will save a lot of trouble. Good idea that of yours, Winton, dropping your handkerchief at that path. Saved no end of time. Raymond Prim. Hum ! Snake-bite, and in this climate. Must put him in cold storage till we can fix up to give him a Christian burial—*him!*—Christian burial. Then I must seal up the house in the name of His Majesty—you know that animal was a naturalised Englishman—and then make an inventory. By the way, I am afraid I shall have to ask your brother and you to stop a bit at Okoda. I shall want your signatures for—— Ah ! good man ! '

Frank entered, bearing a bottle of the most excellent wine of Champagne, and, at Harris' request, produced wineglasses and biscuits.

' Just the tonic you want,' said Harris, administering doses. ' Now tell me——'

' Not a bit of it ! ' interrupted Cecil. ' Tell us by what lucky chance you came here.'

Harris thought for a moment, and when he spoke it was seriously.

' There was neither luck nor chance about that. I should rather call it a watchful providence. Just after I saw you off this morning, it came to me—from the outside, not from the inside, if you follow me, much, I expect, as the idea of dropping that handkerchief came to you.' Cecil nodded. ' It came to me, then,

that you were going into deadly peril alone and that I ought not to have left you. It hit me very hard till all at once I saw daylight. I went up to the Governor and told him that a notorious criminal was up stream at Prim's place—which was true enough, whenever he's there—and I got him to let me have his steam launch, a search warrant, and half a dozen files of men, half the garrison of Okoda, and off I started to safeguard you and pay a long-meditated visit to Prim. The odd thing is that your safety, yours, a perfect stranger's, absolutely eclipsed the prospect of laying Prim by the heels, which is what I am here for.'

'What you are here for?'

Harris regarded them with some surprise.

'My dear fellows! Surely you don't think that a man so extremely capable, so intensely evil as Raymond Prim would confine his activities to a few closeted investigations and an isolated act of revenge? Moreover H.M. Foreign Office does not discover a new billet for a pretty high official at an unhallowed hole like Okoda for nothing. Think it out.'

CLAUDE E. BENSON.

AT CHAERONEA.

BY F. CAMERON SILLAR.

'GYLISSUS!'

'Yes, sir?'

'Has the post come yet?'

'I haven't heard, sir. I'll go and see.'

'What a graceful boy! Pity he's a Spartan. And what an outlandish name! I really must call him something else, something civilised—Gorgias, or Krito perhaps. He has the makings of a philosopher about him with a pretty talent for turning a neat epigram. An intellectual true to type if ever there was one. Sparta's only thinker! Ha! She may yet have a claim to fame as the birthplace of a greater Gylippus than the dour bully who thrashed poor old Nicias. Well, thank the gods the boy has no taste for a military career!'

'Here are your letters, sir. There's one with the Imperial crest.'

'Aha! Let's have a look. Yes, by Jove, you're right. That's Julian's fist. I'd know it anywhere. Now what can Caesar want with me that he should get his secretary to write? I hope it's not a summons to Rome. It's no joke crossing the Ionian at my age, though I hear the new packets they've put on are a great improvement.'

'His Imperial Majesty can lie on the table there in the sun for a little and ripen. It isn't often that Plutarch can keep Caesar waiting, and Plutarch rather enjoys the experience! What's the next?'

'There's one from Rhodes, sir.'

'Rhodes? Rhodes? Do I know anyone in Rhodes, Gylippus? Oh, by the way, I've decided to call you Krito. I don't like the name Gylippus.'

'It's a family name, sir. I'm descended from the famous Gylippus—you know, the one who whacked the Athenians at Syracuse. We're rather proud of it.'

'What! proud of being descended from that swashbuckler? You can say that to me after taking down my "Nicias"?'

'He was a first-rate soldier anyway. I sometimes wish——'

'Now, look here, Krito—yes, Krito will do—don't run away

with the idea that you're going to follow in his footsteps. You're going to be the first philosopher that ever came out of Sparta. You may not make so much money as you would if you took a commission in one of Hadrian's legions in Britain, but you'll have more claim to consideration. As soon as you're ready I shall write to Caesar about you, and I think I have some little influence in that quarter. We should be able to get you a readership somewhere. Now what else is there ?'

' Only bills I think, sir, and one bulky packet from Massilia.'

' Well, never mind the bills, let's see the packet from Massilia. Don't know this seal. Never seen the writing in my life. What vile wax they use in Gaul ! Lie there in the sun, O Massiliot, and ripen beside Caesar while we see what Rhodes has to say. Probably a begging letter from one of those two-a-penny philosophers with which the island swarms.

' Thought so ! Calls himself Milo . . . addresses me, if you please, as "Venerable Sir," as if I were ninety . . . says he is of the school of Ammonius . . . no pupils . . . wife and family to keep . . . the old story, and can I help him . . . and so he throws himself on the mercy of . . . of . . . what does he throw himself on the mercy of ? I can't read it. What do you make of it, Krito ? '

' Of his revered father—yes, father-in-philosophy I think it is.'

' Oh ! His father-in-philosophy. He calls me that, does he ? Well, it's not too bad—father . . . in . . . philosophy. Yes, I rather like that. Just ask my wife if she can spare me a minute.'

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' Oh, Timoxena, I just wanted to ask if that young Jew from Ephesus had paid his fees for last term ? '

' What, Daoud ? '

' Yes, Daoud.'

' Oh, yes, two or three weeks ago—a thousand drachmae.'

' Good ! I just want to send a small present to a friend of mine in Rhodes who's in low water. He was at school with me.'

' You're always sending presents to people who were at school with you, Plutarch. How the school held them all I can't imagine.'

' Well, never mind, my dear. This is a very special friend.'

' Oh, well, I suppose you must. Don't be too long over your letters if you want to see Lamprias in his bath.'

' We'll look at the letters later on, Krito. To see one's grandson in his bath is a most instructive recreation. It's like gardening—it

helps to preserve one's sanity. Still, neither a bath nor a lecture serves any purpose unless it's purgative.'

'Chloe's not going to bath him just yet ; his bedtime's in about an hour.'

'All right, my dear. Call me when you're ready. Now, Krito. Give me the Emperor's letter. I have mortified my curiosity long enough and can face any wigging with philosophic calm. Cut the seals off carefully. They may be worth something some day. Now !'

'**My DEAR PLUTARCH**,—I have some good news for you. [Well, I'm not found out yet, thank heaven!] I got Caesar in an amiable mood yesterday and put before him Casca's recommendation that you should be appointed Procurator of Greece. His Imperial Majesty was pleased to be immensely struck with the idea and insisted on signing the Commission then and there. I was to let you know at once. [Aha ! Krito, my stock's going up!] He desired me to send you at the same time his kindest regards and to say that he was much taken with your latest biography—Alexander—and looks forward with interest to your coming Life of the Great Caesar. [Remind me to send His Majesty a signed copy of the Edition de Luxe as soon as it's published, Krito. I hope it'll be all right—the prolific Julius wrote so much himself, that it's difficult to see his life in its proper perspective.]

'I shall be sending on the Commission in a week or two by special messenger—young Timoleon probably, who will have instructions to put himself at your disposal as agent.

'Please give my respects to your wife.

'**JULIAN**.'

'Well, well ! What d'you think of that, Krito ? I'm beginning to be noticed. I wonder what the emoluments of a Procurator are ?'

'Isn't that a postscript, sir ? It may say there.'

'Yes, you're quite right ; it does. A hundred sestertia. What on earth is that in drachmae ? I'm no good at foreign exchanges.'

'Oh, about seventeen thousand five hundred.'

'Oh, come, that's not too bad. I call that spacious. I never knew there was so much money in philosophy. I must tell Timoxena. We'll be able to put in that new system of central heating she's set her heart on.'

'Now, let's see what our Massilia correspondent has to say.

Why, what reams he's written. His vile Latin script tries my eyes. Read it to me, Krito.'

' "SIR,—I am taking the liberty of writing to you with regard to your forthcoming Life of the Great Julius Caesar. Lately, in going through some old family documents I came upon an old manuscript written by my great-grandfather T. Marcius Pollio. He was an officer on Caesar's staff in Gaul, and during the civil war, and has recorded some of his experiences which I venture to think may be new to you. I am sending you the manuscript in the hope that it will not be too late to be of use. In any case, I shall be deeply honoured if you will accept it as a small token of my esteem for the illustrious biographer of Chaeronea.

' "T. MARCIUS POLLIO."

' Well, that'll be great fun. In all my research into Caesariana I don't remember to have come across a Marcius Pollio. Just look him up in the card index, Krito. My memory's not what it was.'

' No, sir, there isn't a card for him. I don't remember the name myself. There's Asinius Pollio.'

' Oh, I know him of course. But this Marcius may really give us some new facts. It is most civil of his descendant to send me the MS. But I hope the great-grandfather's style is better than his own. It's a regular tradesman's letter. He's probably a shipping agent or something. I know there were a lot of business openings in Gaul for anyone with any connexion with Caesar.'

' Now for the MS. Just bring me that footstool. My leg's rather bad to-day. Too much of that new after-dinner wine that Paullus sent me from Lusitania. I must get that charlatan Galleo to prescribe for me. Yes, there. That's right. Now, fire away and don't read too fast. . . . What is it now, Timoxena? I'm busy.'

' It's the barber, Plutarch. He says you made an appointment with him to come and trim your beard.'

' So I did, by Jove! I'd quite forgotten. Well, send him along. I can listen to Krito and have my beard trimmed at the same time.'

' I never knew you listen to anybody for long. However, you won't be able to talk too much while you're being trimmed. It'll cost you such a lot. This new barber, Anacreon, charges by time and he can't trim while you talk.'

' Well, a philosopher won't go far unless he can talk. You remember that, Krito. But, oh, I forgot. Talking of money,

what do you think ? Caesar has appointed me Procurator of Greece at a salary of seventeen thousand five hundred a year.'

' Oh, Plutarch ! Now we'll be able to put in central heating !'

' There, Krito, what did I tell you ? But send along Anacreon, my dear.'

' Good evening, sir.'

' Good evening, Anacreon. Look here, my beard's getting very straggly. I want you to trim it in that new rather neat Spanish fashion. Besides, summer's beginning and it'll be much too hot for a great beard like mine.'

' Very good, sir. You just leave it to me.'

' Now, Krito ! '

' " Being sick at heart at the ill news of the most foul murder of my beloved master, C. Julius Caesar, I, Titus Marcius Pollio, have determined to take my own life, despairing of the Republic. It is, however, my intention, partly from a yearning to live again the days when I served my master and partly in the hope of preserving for posterity the knowledge of Caesar as a man and a friend, to set forth, before I die, some of the adventures in which it was my fortune to participate with him.

' " After the crossing of the Rubicon in the 705th year since the foundation of the city, it was my good fortune to be present at the taking of Corfinium as Tribune of the sixth cohort of Caesar's Tenth Legion. Within the city there were shut up sixteen cohorts under Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus." '

' Aheno what ? '

' Ahenobarbus, sir. In Greek, Brassbeard.'

' All right. Go on. I remember him now. I rather like friend Pollio's archaic style, though Latin constructions are ponderous.'

' " This Commander had for long held Caesar in contempt and hatred and it was the dearest wish of every legionary to capture him and to bring him prisoner before our general. When the city fell and our troops poured into the streets I was carried in with the first rush and found myself near to the place where Ahenobarbus held his Praetorium." '

' Praetorium ? General Headquarters, I suppose.'

' " So I captured him and brought him before Caesar." '

' It sounds very easy, eh, Anacreon ? " So I captured him and brought him before Caesar" ? Yes, I rather like that. Go on, Krito.'

“ I brought his surgeon also, for Ahenobarbus was sickly, having but lately taken a sleeping-draught in the belief that it was a cup of poison. This he had done intending to put an end to his life when the city surrendered to Caesar. But when he heard of Caesar's clemency he was relieved to know the draught was but a sleeping-draught.”

“ That'll make good copy, Krito. Make a note of that straight away. That's it. Go on.”

“ When Caesar saw us, he came forward with both his hands stretched out.”

“ ‘ Ah, Ahenobarbus,’ he said, ‘ I thank heaven to see you safe and sound. I had feared you had perished.’ This Caesar said with a twinkling eye, having heard privily of the sleeping-draught.

“ Then Caesar, turning to me, said :

“ ‘ Pollio, my dear friend, I cannot thank you heartily enough for saving the general from my wild soldiery.’

“ Then he turned to the other again :

“ ‘ Ahenobarbus, you have seen my strength and my clemency. Will you take service with me ? Believe me, I have no malice towards our mutual friend, Pompey, but he is ill-advised. While he is in his present mood, there is not room in the Empire for both of us. He does not read the times aright. Government by a weak and unrepresentative chamber is no longer practical politics, and I mean to put an end to it in fact, if not in name. And I mean to do it, not, I swear before the gods, for the sake of ambition or personal aggrandisement, but for the sake of the great Republic which you and I both serve. I ask you, will you join me ? ’

“ ‘ Sir,’ said the other, ‘ I am no turncoat. While I am free I will oppose your schemes to the best of my ability, believing you and not the senate to be a menace to the safety of the State.’

“ ‘ Well, my dear Ahenobarbus,’ said Caesar, ‘ you are free to depart now if you will. Forgive me if I say that I respect your principles, if not your acumen. But before you go I beg you will dine with me.’

“ ‘ Caesar, you do not understand me. I will have no dealings with an enemy of the Roman people. I will not sit at meat with you. I will not parley with you.’

“ ‘ So be it,’ said Caesar, sorrowfully. ‘ Go in peace. But remember this,’ he said sternly : ‘ neither you nor Pompey nor anyone else can deflect me from my purpose. I alone can remake Rome, and remake it I will.’

“ “ And so Domitius repaired again to Pompey, and the news of Caesar’s mercy was noised abroad so that men did not fear his coming and cities opened their gates to him. And in sixty days Caesar was master of Rome and Italy, spilling no drop of blood. But Pompey took ship to Illyria with his popinjays and soldiery effete with the soft lying of peace.

“ “ It was about this time that Labienus revolted to Pompey. Which, when Caesar heard it, wounded him deeply. To me he said, ‘ Labienus ! Will it be you next, Pollio ? Am I a leper to be shunned, that my best friends should desert me ? Labienus, the finest of all my divisional officers ! Shall I be left with a single friend when the war is over, or shall I be surrounded only by those who know which side their bread is buttered ? ’

“ “ I take pleasure even now to remember that I and Asinius Pollio and others were able to bring comfort to our master by our protestations.

“ “ And Caesar, generous always, despatched after Labienus his equipage and his money which in his haste he had left behind him.” ”

“ This man’s story rings true. Wherever he speaks of an incident I know of, it is one corroborated by my best authorities. The manuscript is a genuine “ find,” Krito.”

“ “ Then Caesar, being in need of treasure to prosecute the war, went straightway to the treasury. But Metellus, a tribune, opposed him and stood barring the way. So Caesar, turning to me and to Asinius Pollio, who were with him, said, smiling :

“ “ ‘ This young man does not know us. Open the door for me.’

“ “ And when we made as if to advance, to Metellus, still barring the passage with his body and alleging some law :

“ “ ‘ Arms and laws do not lie abed together. Mars will not suffer much freedom of speech. Does your conscience forbid you to countenance my action ? Then withdraw.’

“ “ And turning again to us :

“ “ ‘ I commend myself for my own patience in endeavouring to persuade the obdurate. These people are blinded by the gods and cannot learn that they are at my disposal.’

“ “ And to Metellus again :

“ “ ‘ Now, young sir, give me the keys.’

“ “ But Metellus would not, so Caesar, summoning the armourer, directed him to break open the door and, his patience being exhausted, said to Metellus :

“ “ ‘ My very dear young friend, I have but to raise my finger

and you are a dead man. The deed is no harder to accomplish than the word to say.'

' " So Metellus, terrified, departed, and Caesar laughed heartily and entered the treasury."

' Now that really is a good tale. What a fellow he was! You know, Krito, I'm not surprised these Romans whacked us. They know what they want, and take it while we Greeks have a way of wondering what the devil we really do want. Eh? What's that, Anacreon? Yes, a trifle more off. Go on, Krito.'

' Then Caesar, leaving some of us to hold Italy on his behalf, set out for Spain, where Varro and Afranius commanded for Pompey. Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the same that Caesar had captured and set free at Corfinium, commanded at Massilia. But Caesar, leaving C. Trebonius to invest the city by land and D. Brutus with a few ships to blockade the harbour, marched by forced marches into Spain and conquered in ninety days all that opposed him. Returning thence to Rome, and having heard that Massilia was taken, he prepared to follow Pompey into Illyria.

' Taking ship at Brundisium he slipped past Pompey's fleet, commanded by Bibulus, and landed with but five legions and six hundred horse. Antonius waited at Brundisium to gather together reinforcements. Yet Caesar would not tarry but marched forward towards Dyrrhachium, making himself master of Oricum and Apollonia.

' At Apollonia he waited, seeing that his force was not strong enough to make headway against Pompey's army without reinforcements. And being impatient of Antonius' delay, he boarded, in disguise, a small twelve-oared vessel, taking with him but two companions, myself and Gela, a favoured slave, intending to run the blockade and bring over his army from Brundisium himself.'

' Go on; this is exciting! I've heard the story before and always thought it an invention of that mountebank Antonius. But this is confirmation!'

' Yet the gods ordained a contrary gale of wind and in the mouth of the river a tumultuous sea. And the mariners would have turned back. Then Caesar made himself known to them, laughing at their astonishment and pressing them to proceed. But the owner of the vessel said :

' Sir, no boat could live at sea to-night. The gods are angry.'

' La, la, as our Gallic friends say, who are you to know the will of the gods? If it indeed be true that they are angry and mean

us to perish, why, it will be a quick death and unforetold, than which I can imagine no more easy end. So let us go on, and if all is well, I will reward you as only Caesar can.'

' " So the seamen took heart and bent to their oars. But presently a mighty wave swept over the prow of the boat and bore away the slave Gela into the raging darkness. And Caesar gave a great cry and bade the captain search for his friend. But the captain without more ado turned the vessel back into the river mouth, and Caesar abandoned his attempt, seeing that even he could not prevail against the tempest.

' " So Caesar returned to his camp. And the soldiers met him in crowds. And one reproached him, saying :

' " ' Sir, you should not take such risks. Where should we be or Rome either if you were to perish ? '

' " And Caesar, laughing at his concern, took him by the ear and said to those around him :

' " ' Do you know what I was doing, had the gods been willing ? No ? Well, my friends, I was deserting to Pompey ! '

' " And all the soldiers laughed, and Caesar . . . '''

' " And Caesar . . . " Go on, Krito. Go on.'

' That's all, sir. The manuscript comes to an end.'

' How excessively tantalising ! You're sure there's nothing more ? Let me have a look. What, Anacreon ? Oh, all right, but your predecessor used to give me a month. A week's very short credit. Yes, yes, I quite understand. No, you fool, I'm not the least offended. Now, Krito, let's see that manuscript.'

' Sir, I think I hear someone calling you.'

' It's my wife, by Jove ! Lamprias in his bath ! I'll look at that later, Krito. No, don't you come ; you never know what to say to him. Coming, my dear. Coming ! '

*THE SHEEP-EATING PARROT OF NEW ZEALAND.**A PROBLEM FOR THE HUMANITARIAN.*

'To kill or not to kill, that is the question,' and how difficult a question it is this brief paper may serve to make clear. For it has never been my lot to become acquainted with a more confiding, interesting, or amusing bird than the kea. If it were not for his one weakness, in fact, he might be the most lovable of all birds. With his bright green plumage and brilliant scarlet underwing he is very fair to look upon. He is a true mountain bird, haunting the central and southern portions of the main range of the Southern Alps, feeding, it is supposed, mainly upon the berries or drupes of certain low-growing shrubs and 'mat-plants,' such as *Coprosma Petriei* and *C. repens*, and upon grubs or larvae. There, among the rocks and precipices, the snowfields and the glaciers, he spends his whole life, never descending into the low country even in the depth of winter when the snow extends to 2000 feet or less. He generally breeds in clefts and chasms among these almost inaccessible solitudes, though instances of his choosing comparatively low altitudes are not unknown.

He is a most companionable bird, infinitely inquisitive, and full of fun and frolic. Busied in the collection of plants on some steep, stony ridge, I have looked up to find two or three keas assembled within five yards of me, intently watching every movement, looking sidelong, ducking and bowing after the manner of parrots, turning to one another with knowing nods and winks as if sharing the rare treat afforded by this strange intruder upon their privacy. Weather-bound in some rough hut on the edge of a glacier we have found amusement in his friendliness and his comical antics. He perches on the door sill, and if we keep quiet in our bunks, enters boldly, hopping and flapping about the table and seeking what he may devour. One has been seen to tease a comrade by dropping stones upon him, or near him, as he perches upon a lower eminence. In captivity he is very tame and apparently quite happy. In many back-country stations a kea is kept in a wire-netting cage to act as a decoy to his wild brethren, and if he escapes he soon gets his fill of liberty and returns to his quarters. If you throw a stone at him he watches it coming, turns his head as it passes to follow it in its

flight, and is evidently greatly amused. He is a perpetual delight to the explorer of his lofty domains, flying high and screaming his queer call which, in quality, resembles that of a jackdaw, but is greatly prolonged to produce the sound which his name endeavours to record ; and in those parts where he is not regularly persecuted he is nearly always present, in companies of seven or eight, accompanying the climber along the high stony ridges, flapping from rock to rock when he reaches the height of five or six thousand feet.

How, then, it may be asked, has anybody the heart to kill him ? Or who but some case-hardened collector or mere bloodthirsty 'sportsman' would wish to do him any harm ? And why should there be a price, and a big price, upon his humorous head ?

Just as there are man-eating tigers, exceptional individual sinners, so, unfortunately, there are sheep-eating keas, exceptional, individual destroyers of sheep. The kea alights upon the back of his victim, tears through the wool and skin with his powerful beak, and penetrates into the vitals, seeking the kidney-fat. He works by night, so that it is almost impossible to catch him in the act. For many years there seemed to be a doubt about the identity of the marauder ; it was sought to cast the blame upon gulls, or upon the large, sluggish harrier. But all such well-meant endeavours to clear the character of the kea have long been abandoned ; the evidence against him is too damning. One sheep-farmer, for instance, well known to myself, finding that he was losing several sheep every night near a particular spot, lay in wait with a gun, and in bright moonlight shot the murderer upon the sheep's back. The suffering inflicted upon the poor beast simply will not bear thinking of, for it is not killed outright. I have seen a wretched sheep driven in to the yard with the mob with a gaping hole in its back through which its breath was noisily blowing and audible a long way off. No one who has seen the dreadful results of a kea's attack will be found to blame the station-owners or the local authorities, who pay from 5s. to as much as 10s. apiece for kea beaks. Shepherds and musterers often carry a shotgun sawn off to about two feet in length for shooting the kea. Men are to be seen sometimes carrying a live kea upon their backs in a wire cage up to the heights to act as a decoy. Nearly all back-country workers know to bring keas down within reach of shot by a shrill whistling cry which does not at all closely resemble the voice of the bird. The innocent must suffer with the guilty, for there is no possible means of distinguishing the criminal. When one of a 'mob' of keas is shot the others

generally look on in an interested way until all have fallen. Keas are easily caught alive. When they are about at night a handkerchief is laid on the ground with a noose of string loosely surrounding it. The inquisitive bird, coming to investigate, sooner or later gets a foot or two within the circle, and a smart pull, from a distance of a few feet, does the rest.

It has been found quite difficult to account for the genesis of this strange habit in a bird whose ways are in all other respects so peaceful and charming. At one time it was thought that the kea, having the habit of tearing up and asunder, in search of grubs, those massive plants (*Raoulia eximia*) which are called 'Vegetable Sheep,' had naturally transferred his attention to the animal; but this will not do. It seems most probable that the birds developed a taste for mutton-fat by picking at skins hung up on rails, and then, in pursuit of the new dainty, learned how to help themselves.

In any case, there the habit is, rooted and incurable; hence the question 'to kill or not to kill.' In the savage wastes of the southwest, where there never were and never will be sheep, personally I am only too glad to associate with the kea and to give him law. But elsewhere, no doubt, we ought to slay and spare not. We do perceive here a divided duty. We have entered his country and established, in a part of it at least, one of the great primary industries of the world, an industry whose very existence is threatened by his activities. So, with a deep sense of shame and a heavy heart, we kill.

ARNOLD WALL.

A WOMAN AT THE HELM.

BY ALICE LOWTHER.

I.

HE sat crouched, his huge shoulders bent, his patriarchal beard bunched on the table before him like a crumpled fan. What time and anxiety had failed to achieve, shame had wrought at a stroke: Captain Ford was a broken man.

His wife gazed at him in a maze of fear.

'But—but,' she stammered, 'they don't—they can't mean—'

The Captain's voice seemed to come from a distance, so muffled it was, so hollow a travesty of its jocund self.

'My son—your son—is a thief.'

'No, no. It isn't true. Henry, don't look like that. There's some mistake.'

He pointed to the paper in her hand.

'No mistake, Annie. You've got it there—in black and white. Since the day he took over the shop Morris hasn't paid a penny-piece either to the owners or to the manufacturers. We've got to face it, wife. The boy's a rogue.'

She flung the letter she was gripping to the floor.

'I don't believe it,' she protested passionately. 'I won't believe it. He's my son.'

'Our son: that's so. We've spoilt him between us, lass. Always idle, always vagrant—throughout the years. And now this!' His head fell forward on his breast. 'We might have known,' he muttered. 'But we wouldn't.'

'Oh,' she cried, clutching him by the arm, almost shaking him in the rampancy of motherhood, 'you talk daft. It isn't true. I tell you it isn't. Lazing's one thing, theft's another. And even there he was all right before his accident.'

'He was never all right,' rumbled the Captain. 'Only we shut our eyes. He was our only son. We had to hope.'

Her frame stiffened to animosity.

"Had," she cried. "Was." You are no father. You were always hard on the boy. You never forgave him for not taking to the sea.'

The Captain made no answer. What was the use ?

'It isn't fair,' she went on wildly. 'It's cruel. No one should be condemned unheard—least of all Morris. I'll fetch him. I'll go this minute. He'll explain. I know he'll explain.'

The Captain raised his stricken head, but his protest died unspoken. What, after all, did it matter ? Poor Annie ! She'd got to learn. As well that way as another.

At the door she stopped, her thin nose twitching, the long line of her lip dragged sharply downward. 'It was those months in hospital that ruined him,' she flung back spitefully. 'That was your choice, and don't you forget. Whatever's happened since you've only yourself to blame.'

For a long time Ford continued staring at the closed door. 'Only himself to blame.' A hard saying ! But perhaps she was right. Perhaps he'd done ill to interfere. Morris crippled might have made a more reputable citizen than Morris sound. A phrase knelled through his brain : 'Better to enter into life maimed.' And the lad's accident had been self-bid, the outcome of a drunken brawl. The ways of Providence were strange. Maybe when, in his puny might, he had opposed the surgeons he was pitting his will against a divine decree. 'Don't amputate,' he had said. In vain the doctors fumed and argued. The boy's leg, crushed between the dockside and an incoming steamer, was mashed to pulp ; unless it was removed at once he was practically doomed, they told him.

"Practically." Ford had seized the word as a drowning man a spar. 'You admit he has a chance ?'

'One in a thousand,' snapped the surgeon. Then, more gently, 'No man in his senses would take the risk.'

The Captain gazed at his son's still face. (There was a long cut down the left cheek, he remembered.)

'Don't amputate,' he had repeated.

And to that he had held. Nothing they might say could move him. To their threats of manslaughter he turned a deaf ear ; their aspersions on his fatherhood he met with a steady stare. His decision was made. He had chosen for his son as he would have chosen for himself. Crippledom for Ford was a manifestation worse than death. Oh, but pride of the body was his ! He exulted in strong straight limbs as he revelled in the open—in wide wind-swept spaces, in the clean tang of the sea, in the fierce scud of the storm.

Well, he had had his will. And the thousandth chance had won.

Morris had recovered. His son had recovered—recovered to be a thief.

The Captain's hand shut convulsively. 'I acted for the best,' he muttered aloud. Yet even as he voiced the excuse he knew it discounted. Deeds were the test of a man; good intentions the defence of fools. If he had erred, if in his pride he had been presumptuous, it was right he should be punished. Punished? A puzzled frown bent his brows. Something wrong there. God was just. He wouldn't punish a father by criminalising his son. Yet stay! Morris, too, had chosen. When he regained consciousness he had declared himself for once in accord with his father. 'Sooner—death,' he had urged in a fierce, moaning whisper.

Cumbrously Ford rose to his feet. Enough of this! No good worrying about matters beyond his ken. A man had his work to do, his duty to perform. And God had His. Each to his job.

II.

Standing bent, his great head barely escaped the chandelier. In the past, entering it fresh from the sea, Ford had likened this room of his wife's with its litter of china and clutter of rugs and tapestry to an uncomely woman bedizened for conquest. Even now, as from habit, his hand dragged testily at the valanced curtains. Yet his thoughts were far afield. Forgotten for once his daily campaign for light and air. He was thinking of his son—of Morris.

Always it seemed to him now, looking back, the lad had shown pitch. He recalled his turbulent boyhood, his fits of sullenness, his shrill-tongued violence. What he had needed was discipline. And that, perforce, he had lacked. An odd thrashing, administered during his father's brief sojourns on shore, counted for little. Besides, there had been Annie to contend with. She was always too soft with the boy. But Morris had good blood in him. The Captain had banked on that—on that, and a sailor's training.

Himself one of a long line of seamen, Ford had taken his son's career for granted. The lad's rebellion had left him dumbfounded. 'I hate the sea,' he had averred with passionate emphasis. In the scene that followed it was he and his mother who talked. The Captain's disappointment was too bitter to hide—or to voice. 'Better a willing engineer than a coerced sailor,' he told himself stoically. And on his next return home, 'You are still of the same

mind ?' he queried. 'Good. Then go to Denham's on Monday. I shall sign your indentures to-morrow.'

For a space things went better. Morris liked his job, and if in his off-hours he was wild his father's long absences and his mother's connivence made concealment of his delinquencies easy ; and his accident, occurring only a few weeks after the Captain's retirement from the sea, threw into dim perspective incidents which, disclosed at the time, had seemed matters of portentous enough import.

For weeks he lay between life and death. Followed twelve months in hospital, and a further period of semi-invalidism at home. At the end of two years, save for a barely perceptible limp, he appeared much as before his accident : a little lanker of limb, a little bleaker of eye, a little less accessible to reason or appeal. To the old folk he was as one given back from the dead. They hailed him as hero ; they loaded him with attention and favours. Nothing they could do for him was too much, no sacrifice for his benefit too great. To eke out his pension, the Captain took over the management of a small tobacconist's shop. 'Dignity be hanged !' he countered his wife's pained protests. 'Why, Annie lass, isn't Morris more to us than the neighbours ? Besides, it's only a part-time job. I'm putting a girl in. No need for me to go there myself except in the evenings and at odd times when she's out. And it won't be for long. One other voyage would have done the trick if it hadn't been for my eyes.'

So, for a while. But as the months slipped by the Captain grew restive. All very well while the lad was ill, but now he was sound of limb, striding about with the best of them, flinging good money to right and left, a change was betokened.

'Get work,' he boomed in his great voice.

'It's not so easy,' grumbled Morris.

'I believe you, my son. Leastways, not where *you* look for it.'

Annie hovered round, pale and anxious.

'Let be, Father,' she pleaded. 'Give him time.'

But even Annie grew peeved at last. She would go far for her son in injustice, but her pride in him was shaken. Why, after all, didn't he work ? The neighbours harassed her with inquiries, and her married daughters waxed loudly denunciatory. 'It's a shame,' they declared. 'Dad working while that hulking fellow loaf ! You shouldn't allow it, Mother. You should put your foot down.' Moreover, Morris hale, his mother discovered, was more expensive in

upkeep than Morris ill. He dressed well, he expected luxuries, he insisted on a full pocket. 'A chap's got to keep his end up,' he muttered discontentedly. And if she stinted him he sulked—and ran up bills.

Her remonstrances he met with churlish grumblings.

' You are in a God-Almighty hurry to get rid of me—both you and Dad. Seems to me a fellow who's gone through what I've gone through deserves a bit of consideration. Life owes me something—what? After all those months! And directly I can stir you are for pitchforking me into a muggy workshop.'

But Annie persisted. Once roused, in her quiet way she could be very determined. In the end her nagging forced Morris into a job. Unfortunately it couldn't keep him there. His employers found their new workman careless and—under reproof—insolent. By the end of the week Morris was home again.

' I might have been dirt—the blinking upstart! I asked him whom he thought he was talking to.'

The Captain eyed his son from under beetling brows. That afternoon he visited the shipping firm whereby he had been so long employed. On his return, ' I've got you a job,' he said briefly. ' Second engineer. On the *Medusa*. You sail Wednesday.'

' To sea? I'll not go,' cried Morris hotly.

Ford drew himself to his full height.

' You'll go,' he thundered in the voice his seamen knew and feared, ' if I've to have you carried on board.'

Annie looked at him fearfully. She knew when resistance was useless.

' Is it for long, Henry?'

' Nine months. I wager he'll hold this job down.' The Captain's eye was still on his son. ' What's this I hear of Tilda? You've been cadging money from her.'

' From Tilda?' gasped Annie. ' The girl in the shop. Oh, Morris!'

Morris had the grace to blush.

' It was only borrowed,' he muttered. ' Nothing to fuss about. Anyhow, I'd got to live. You grudged me.'

From the old man's eye leapt a look of bitter scorn.

' Enough,' he said. ' You sail Wednesday.'

In his heart Ford hoped much of this voyage. He had a great belief in the sea, and at bottom he believed in his son. ' Don't worry, Annie lass,' he would say. ' The lad's where he belongs.'

Mark my words, the sea'll be his salvation ; it'll souse the bile out of him.'

But whatever hopes he cherished were dispelled on his son's return.

'Never again. Say what you like, Dad. I'm done with the *Medusa*.'

Ford's eyes, for all their tiredness, swept him mercilessly.

'That's true. They'd not risk your like again.'

'A dog's life,' blustered Morris. 'I'd sooner starve.'

'And starve you may. Either that or work. I'm through with keeping you.'

Morris thumped with his hand on the table, his tall, lithe figure quiver with facile rage.

'I dare say,' he stuttered. 'You'd be glad enough to see me dead. That's why you wouldn't have my leg off.'

Ford turned on his heel.

'My hat, Annie. Don't wait dinner.'

The next morning he delivered his ultimatum.

'You are my son, you shall have your chance. I'm giving up the shop. If I can get it for you, will you take over the management ?'

Morris rose unsteadily to his feet. He was just finishing breakfast, and egg still clung to his lip-corners.

'Chance ! You said chance ? That's no work for a man.'

'No,' agreed the Captain. 'It remains to be proved if you are fit even for that.'

'Father,' whimpered Annie.

'Hush, wife. The job's been good enough for me. It's good enough for him. If he dismisses the girl he can scrape a living from it.' He turned again to his son. 'Will you take it ?' Then, more sternly, 'Refuse, and out of this house you go.'

Morris tossed aside his table-napkin.

'Aye,' he said. 'I'll take it, since you force me. But—you'll be sorry.' His light eyes flickered unsteadily from one face to the other. 'Get this clear,' he continued bombastically. 'Once matters are settled, I'm done with you. I'll not enter this house again till—till you ask me.'

And, to the Captain's surprise, he had kept his word. For three months now he had held aloof. Well, no harm in that. It showed spirit. There was stuff in the boy after all. Apparently, too, he was attending to business : customers, sent by the Captain, had

reported him serving behind the shop counter. The father, incorrigibly hopeful, had bided his time. He had no false pride. When—even now he said ‘when,’ not ‘if’—the lad made good, he would do any climbing down required. ‘Ask him home again?’ But certainly. Why not? Only, no hurry. Six months wasn’t too long, considering.

So he had waited.

Then this morning, the bombshell. No receipts sent to the owners, new stock still unpaid for. A deficit of £200—perhaps more.

III.

When Mrs. Ford re-entered the room her husband was standing by the fireside, his elbow on the mantelshelf, one huge foot crushing the pampas-grass on the hearthstone.

‘Well?’

For a while she stood silent.

‘He—he’s gone,’ she managed at last.

Ford nodded. He wasn’t surprised.

‘How long since?’

‘Three days.’

‘And the girl?’

‘She—she’s gone too, Henry.’

‘So that’s that.’ The Captain gave a final kick at the pampas-grass and lurched stiffly toward the table. ‘Poor Annie!’ he muttered.

‘What are you going to do?’ she whispered, the muscles on her thin neck working visibly.

‘Do!’ He sat down. ‘What can we do?’

‘That letter, Henry. They’ve known you a long time. They aren’t out for trouble—their writing shows. If you paid up they’d keep quiet.’

‘They would’—grimly. ‘£200.’

‘Oh!’ She wrung her hands. ‘I know we haven’t got it, but we could raise it, Henry—on the pension.’

‘At a ruinous figure. Wife, I’m old.’

‘But you are strong. You don’t look your years.’ Yet, even as she spoke, doubt shook at her heart: he *did* look old, he had the appearance of one spent to a finish. ‘Oh,’ she wailed, ‘what shall we do? We must do *something*. The disgrace——’

'The disgrace has fallen.'

'But if nobody knows! It does make a difference. Of course it does. And we can't let him go to prison. Not our son. Not the baby who pulled at my breasts, the bonny lad who played at my knee. A felon! He! Henry, be merciful.' She was on her knees beside him tugging at his sleeve with hungry hands. 'What does it matter if we have to pay heavily? What does anything matter so that we save our son? We can manage, Henry. I've been thinking—all the way home I've been thinking. We could put by £50 a year, and perhaps, if you asked, they'd let you take on the shop again. I'd help; we'd not need the girl. I'd come down myself and serve. Henry, Henry, save my boy.'

The Captain caught at her shuffling hands.

'Listen, lass. You've got to face it. The lad's no good. We can't save him. Think of the chances he's had. This time'—his face darkened, '"You'll be sorry," he said—he shall lie on the bed he's made. Quod's his desert. When he comes out—'

'No, no.'

'I say yes. It's got to be. There's you. If we did this thing and if anything happened to me, what would become of you?'

'Never mind me.'

'I do. I must. The lass I married shan't be left destitute.'

'Henry.'

'I'll not do it.'

'I beg you.'

'Enough. I've said it.'

'You are a hard man, Henry.'

His grey face twitched. 'Never to you,' he muttered. 'Nor enough to him, belike.'

She did not appear to have heard him. Her voice went wailing on, in a shrilling crescendo of fear. 'Your will! That's it. Always your will. And what about me? Haven't I any right of decision? Isn't the boy mine? Didn't I bear him in blood and in tears? You say it's on my account. If that's true, Henry—if it isn't just your pride that's dictating—save my son. What should I want with money, and my boy a felon? Wouldn't the food stick in my throat? Wouldn't I be choking with that and the shame of it all? Henry, I've been a good wife to you. All these years I've served you, yielding my will to yours. Never, never have I interfered when once your mind was set.'

The Captain gazed at her dazedly. Oh, but she meant it!

She was too stirred for conscious falsity. But—‘ never interfered !’
Merciful heavens !

‘ Annie,’ he said hoarsely, ‘ let be. Don’t you see ? The boy’s counting on our paying. He’d be on us in no time. There’d be all this to live through again. And we couldn’t help him out of his next scrape.’

‘ There’d be no next, Henry. Just this chance more.’

The old man’s head fell on his breast. He didn’t believe it. Yet what could he do ? Precious little good trying to safeguard a mother against her son. But it was wrong, all wrong. . . .

‘ Annie, get up.’

‘ No, no,’ she cried, clinging to his knees, even now understanding him so little that she did not realise her cause was won. ‘ I’ll not get up—I’ll not stir from here till I’ve bent your will. All the years you’ve told our course. You’ve said “ This thing shall be,” and it was. See the result. Is the helmsman guiltless when his ship wrecks ? You’ve had your will, Henry ; you’ve done your worst. Now stand aside. The money’s mine as much as yours. Have I not scraped for it, and scrimped ? Shall I have no voice in its bestowal ? Shall I be forced to fatten on it while my son is branded felon ? ’

Perspiration stood thick on the Captain’s brow. He was racked, tortured.

‘ Take the helm,’ he groaned. ‘ You shall steer unhindered. Yet think well’—his strong hands fell heavy on her shoulders, and his voice steadied to sternness. ‘ Once we’ve paid, we are through. Squeezed and sapless, lass—ready for the dunghill. But let the law take its course and we’d be a stand-by to the lad later when, maybe, he’d have learnt his lesson. Now, choose.’

The woman dropped back on her heels, her upturned face, worn and tear-wet, lit by a transcendent joy.

‘ Thank God ! ’ she sobbed. ‘ Oh, thank God ! ’

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THE SUMMER ENEMY.

Cows do not like me : in its inmost sty
 The pig is plainly hostile, though inactive :
 The horse is far from cordial, but the Fly
 Finds me attractive.

There is some subtle ichor in my veins,
 Some drop of nectar, some divine affection,
 Which doubtless, by alchemic law, explains
 This predilection.

When I go out of doors, the heavens are still,
 But in the upper air I hear a humming,
 And in the distance insect voices shrill,
 ' Hi, Bill ! he's coming ! '

They come in droves and legions, fast and thick,
 Each of them more ferocious than the other,
 Each of them fully warranted to stick
 Closer than brother.

And you might almost take me for a saint,
 Some old church-window medieval fellow,
 Save that my aureole requires a paint
 Darker than yellow.

And each marauder lays his little lance
 In rest, to tease and plague and sting and bully,
 As once the tiny Lilliputians
 The prostrate Gully.

Some trumpet round my forehead, to their cost ;
 Others the ear ; while some, of braver metal,
 Essay the nose, and count the world well lost,
 If they can settle.

What is that god of theirs—Beelzebub ?

I do not like his name or his opinions,
And with the greater heartiness I drub
His serried minions.

Even as I march victoriously back,

With hundreds overthrown to their undoing,
Still I find skirmishers upon my track,
Faint, yet pursuing.

Yet the late year prepares a doom unknown,
And Time, unhaunting, brings in his revenges,
And the Fly Empire shall become as Stone—
And other -henges.

Beware November, cutting like a knife :

O Fly, I do not know your winter quarters
(Though I suspect they don't, at least in life,
Admit reporters)—

But I don't think you'll like it. Once again,
I shall look out upon a world that's freezing,
And find you, numb, upon the window-pane,
Probably sneezing ;

Without a doubt much chastened and subdued ;
Slow and decrepit (I should say, rheumatic) ;
Your wings, it seems, no longer any good ;
Your gait erratic.

Yet be consoled ; for though the hungry tomb
Yawns for you when you realise how chill it is,
Your numerous descendants will resume
The old hostilities ;

And age to age the battle still shall sway
Between your seed and mine, bitter, persistent,
Till the Millennium—and that, they say,
Is still far distant.

ROBERT BELL.

*LETTERS TO HER SISTER, FROM ELIZABETH
BARRETT BROWNING.*

IV.

EDITED BY LEONARD HUXLEY.

LETTER XVII.

A masquerade visit to Herefordshire—Furnishing of Casa Guidi—Weather; letter-writing—Father Prout again; his ‘sublime confidence’—A latent antipathy of nature—Revival of ‘A Blot on the Scutcheon’—Wilson’s first engagement—Position of a Ducal Guard—English wives and Italian husbands—Jealousy in practice—Alessandro’s self-sufficiency—His opinion of R. B. as a husband—*Sharpe’s Magazine* and Mrs. Jameson; Dislike of writing for magazines—Enquiry after English fashions—Assassination of Rossi—Family messages—Father Prout’s handkerchiefs—Possible visitors.

Henrietta and her brother Alfred had gone down into Herefordshire to play a trick on their old friends, the Peyton’s, whose home, The Bartons, was close to the Barretts’ former home of Hope End. They timed their arrival for dusk. Henrietta disguised herself with a thick veil; Alfred pretended a clandestine marriage, and craved the well-known hospitality of The Bartons for himself and a mysterious wife. Hence the ‘embarrassment’ and the ‘protestations’; while Reynolds Peyton, the eldest son, true to expectation, unhesitatingly exclaimed: ‘Whether married or single, a Moulton-Barrett shall be welcome.’ When the lights came and the veil was removed, the amusement may be imagined.

Towards the end of 1848 Italy suffered a fresh convulsion. At Rome, Rossi, a Moderate, was trying to preserve the State, Temporal Power and all, by drastic reforms. Against him stood alike the Nationalists, the party of United Italy and war with Austria; the Democrats, whose excesses he cut short; and the Clericals, who detested enlightenment and reform. On November 15 Rossi was foully assassinated by revolutionaries among the defeated volunteers who had returned from the Lombard campaign. The result was the end of Pio Nono’s liberalism, his flight from Rome to be King Bomba’s guest at Gaeta, and the brief rise of Mazzini’s ideal republic at Rome.

Florence, Nov. 19, 1848.

My ever dearest Henrietta,—I hope you will not have expected this letter too long. I have received Arabel's most welcome one with your little note inside, and I thank her, darling thing, and thank you for quantities of pleasure and satisfaction—though I am not quite at ease, I do confess, as to the consequences of your Herefordshire descent. My dearest Henrietta, nothing more insane was ever committed by the sane—and how you could venture to pay all those visits and dare all that publicity, makes my head turn to think of it. If your secret is kept, the stars will be more praiseworthy than you. For the rest Alfred managed it admirably at the Bartons. I did laugh heartily at dear kind Mrs. Peyton's embarrassment, and Reynolds' prompt good nature, and Tom's natural protestations, and the dignified silence with which you waited for the drawing up of the curtain and coming in of candles. Nothing could be better arranged or more amusing; and then, I dare say, the briefness of the time in which you had to do so much helped your spirits and energies, and made it more enjoyable.

We have been in the greatest fuss lately about curtains, and when I tell you that they are not yet put up, you may appreciate the slowness of our Italians. . . . The bedrooms are to have the curtains altogether of white muslin—in rather a large pattern—two to each window—very full. And the bed in my room is hung with the same. You will wonder at me for having a white bed after all—but the thick materials are out of the question in Italy. White muslin is better than white dimity, which used to be my favourite aversion in England, you know. We bought for my bedroom a beautiful chest of drawers, walnut-wood inlaid with ivory—very beautiful. Robert bought the other day a companion-chest, infinitely more beautiful—in fact far too good for my bedroom—ebony and ivory inlaid, with the curiosest gilt handles—Tritons holding masks. It is altogether beautiful and striking. So that my room will be something splendid when finished! . . .

Oh, how afraid I am lest you should have been expecting a letter too long for your comfort! I remember with deep remorse that it is a month since I wrote last. Do forgive me, and set down that it shall not be so again. There were uncertainties which kept me from writing. I put it off from day to day, thinking of you and loving you, believe me, every day without fail!

And now, will you all believe that Father Prout has spent *every evening here except one*, since I wrote last! Oh, it's a settled thing

—he is our man of the mountain, whom Sinbad carried on his back, and we think it a decided gain whenever we can get tea over before he comes and fixes himself at his smoking post for three hours at least. As a matter of course the wine is rung for instantly, with an apparatus for spitting!—and gradually and after passing through various transitional states of phrenzied impatience, we are becoming resigned, and what is called "*acclimated*." Poor Robert has been sorely tried between his good nature and detestation of the whole proceeding; and then, every now and then, he falls into a mood of indulgence, and we agree that when a man throws himself on you with such a 'sublime confidence' as Robert says, and appeal to sympathy, it is impossible to get up a spirit of repulse strong enough to be effectual! At first you know, he was going to Rome in two or three days—that made us endure for a time—but presently he told us calmly that :

'Florence agreed with him better than Rome did, that he liked the place, liked the beef, liked the bread and especially liked his Attic evenings with Browning and Ba !'

He should be forced to go to Rome on ecclesiastical business—more was the pity—but should come back again at the quickest! This morning Robeit met him out walking, and ventured to ask 'if he had quite given up Rome.'

'No, he should have to go next week, and stay a fortnight'—'and then,' said he, 'I shall return to Florence for two months, and spend every evening with Ba !'

'Sublime confidence,' observed Robert to me, in repeating this. Very sublime indeed! Only one requires some sublimity of another sort, oneself, to be able to bear it with meekness: because you see all our evenings, so happy and tranquil, are absolutely done for, ground to powder, smoked to ashes; and then, nobody is equally inclined every evening for three hours to talk as Robert is forced to do—to make conversation—and this for a person who however full of talent and reading, is by no means near to him on the ground of sympathies of any sort even literary. Never were two clever men more unlike—ways of thinking, ways of feeling, ways of imagining, all most unlike. As for me, I don't take much trouble. I lie on the sofa, and listen, and let myself be called 'Ba!' (for I assure you it comes to that), without much minding: and when he goes away, there's a general burst of indignation and throwing open of doors to get rid of smoke and malice. After all there are things in the man which one can't help liking. I firmly believe

that he is kind-hearted, in spite of his cynicism brought up on every occasion. I believe him to be kind-hearted and feeling—and then, his agreeableness when he pleases, and cleverness in every way, are quite undeniable—while as to principles, it always appears to me that he has a hold by some essential points of Christianity. He will talk with plain disgust of this and that ‘blasphemous rascal’ even while he praises somebody else for calling ‘life a jest’—which as Robert rightly observed to me afterwards, was ‘a commonplace of atheism.’¹ What is the unpleasant part of it, is the defect in delicacy, conventional or otherwise—and of course it is this which prevents him from perceiving at a glance that the constancy of his evening visits is an excess—to say the least of it. Still, one likes the human nature of the man.

We were surprised the other day by an application from Mr. Phelps, the manager of Astley’s, for the author’s permission to bring out straightway a revival of the ‘Blot on the Scutcheon,’ which was acted only for a few nights at Covent Garden. Phelps knew all the circumstances at the time, and understands, as any one may, the dramatic capabilities of the tragedy. I have always said that for pathos and exquisite tragic beauty, it is the first of Robert’s plays. Of course he could only give his assent, stipulating for the purity of the text. This is a great compliment this taking a printed work, and involves no mixing up of the author with theatrical nuisances—he has nothing whatever to do in the matter except as far as the pecuniary proceeds of the new copyright act make an established claim, Mr. Phelps being forced to pay so much tax to the author, every night it runs. The new edition is coming out soon, and was advertised in the last *Edinburgh Review* we hear.

Now I am allowed to commit to you what has hitherto been a great secret, because Wilson was unwilling to make her mother uncomfortable without a fixed necessity and I was bound to say nothing. Do you remember how a year or more ago, I said some jesting words about her being sure to marry one of the Grand Duke’s body Guards. They are all highly respectable and moral men, and some six feet high, which are the necessary conditions of their status, and they are employed exclusively in the palace and the Grand

¹ A pagan, kissing, for a step of Pan,
The wild-goat’s hoof-print on the loamy down,
Exceeds our modern thinker who turns back
The strata—granite, limestone, coal, and clay—
Concluding coldly with! ‘Here’s Law! Where’s God?’

—AURORA LEIGH.

Duke's personal exigencies. Well, most pure jest I spoke in that letter, not being aware at the moment even that Wilson knew one of them except by sight and at beat of drum—and, in jest besides, I repeated to her with a smile what I had written. To my astonishment she looked a little confused, and blushed and laughed, and 'wondered what I should think if my joke were to turn out a true thing.' And then it all came out that 'Mr. Righi, of the Ducal Guard, had been introduced to her by such a friend, and had paid her such and such attentions and that although she had refused to enter into an engagement yet, she thought so highly of him, considered him so superior and excellent, it had become a question with her, etc., etc.'

At first, I confess to having been confounded and not a little sorry. All the objections struck me with great force—the Italian husband—the difference in religion, chiefly. I said what I could, and urged her to enter on no engagement until she had absolutely made up her mind, and not to make up her mind until she had better opportunities of knowing the man,—representing the obvious disadvantage of her imperfect acquaintance with the language and customs of the country. Oh, she saw and admitted everything—especially the obstacle of the point of religion—and she would take time she said—and she really did take time. Some six months intervened between the declaration and the engagement. But then, she was resolved. He promised her the full and free exercise of her religion—she never should be interfered with on any point—and for his part, he believed that a christian was a christian, whatever communion he might belong to : he told her and he told others that he loved her for her consistent conduct and good principles—that one of his own friends had married an English-woman, and that no home in Florence appeared to him so clean and cheerful and well-conducted as his, and also (a great point) he had no reason to be jealous of his wife, and that therefore, among other reasons, he himself preferred an English wife to any other sort of wife. (The Italian women are said to set about choosing a lover directly they have succeeded in choosing a husband, you are to understand !)

Well—this Mr. Righi is the son of a medical man—his mother is alive, and lives with his elder brother who is a rich tradesman in Prato, with town and country house—and it appears that the whole family are very kindly inclined towards Wilson, and even wanted them to marry and take a share of the establishment, which

Mr. Righi would rather not do. The Ducal Guard is not allowed to marry, while in office, and when they prefer to leave the office for the wife, there are various situations open to them according to their qualifications—clerkships in the palace and the like—so that he, being of rather superior education, writing a good hand and knowing something of latin, is looking out for a vacancy ; and he may get from forty to seventy pounds a year perhaps, which in Florence is a high point of prosperity. In the meantime, he shows the utmost attention and attachment, as ‘ promesso sposo ’—and even Robert, who began by disliking the whole matter on account of the difference in religion and country, confesses that he appears to be very good and superior. After all, you see, she has a full right, as every human being has, to know her own mind and judge and choose for herself in such a personal thing as marriage is—and she declares that she never could have liked that London candidate enough to become his wife. Mr. Righi is a very fine looking man—indeed handsome—with a most open, amiable, prepossessing countenance, and I have too high an opinion of Wilson to believe that she has chosen him on the mere strength of his externals. She wears a ring of betrothal, and so does he—it is the custom here : and she *hopes* to have leave to go to England with us in the spring, though the tears come into her eyes, she says, when it is talked of, he is so afraid of her being persuaded by her friends in England to stay with them when they once get hold of her. Oh, there is no danger of her not coming back again ! You may suppose how delightful all this has made Florence to Wilson, and how wonderfully it has quickened her progress in the language. I assure you she is quite fluent in Italian, and even could write Italian letters when we were on our travels. Earnestly I hope it may all come to good and happiness, and that he may prove himself worthy of one who has so much real worth, well proved. Also I do believe, for my own part that he *will*, and that she will be perfectly happy with him, great as this sacrifice is of country and hope. He promised to take her to England whenever they can afford it ; and here it is by no means an uncommon thing for English ladies’ maids to marry Italians and settle happily. The English nurse, I told you of, has an Italian husband, and declares that a better never lived. The female natives don’t always give so good an account of their husbands, it is however to be confessed.

‘ And whose fault is that ? ’ said Alessandro. ‘ Isn’t it the fault of the woman for choosing to have lovers ? ’

'Has *your* wife a lover?' Wilson asked.

'If she had, I would stab to the heart both him and her.'

We continue to like him (Alessandro) very much. He is as good a servant in his department, as can be—an excellent cook and manager—for he goes to market, and selects every thing—meat, poultry, fruit—and our dinners are perfect in their little way—so hot and neatly arranged. From beefsteak pies up to fricassees—he is a master, and from bread and butter puddings to boiled apple-dumplings, (curiously arranged with a mixture of currants, I mean dried currants,) an artist. He apologized in a set oration the other day for not having sooner provided us with a roast turkey—placing one on the table, as he spoke, to our extreme admiration—just such an one, Wilson thinks, as at this time of year would cost twenty shillings in London, and the whole price of which was one shilling and ten pence! It would be hard to find a better turkey. The only fault—not in the turkey—but in Alessandro—is a wonderfully supporting principle of vanity which makes him aspire to do everything without exception. He doesn't like Wilson to interfere, or any one to give a direction; and she declares that he repeats so many times a day: 'I have been to Paris—I have been to London—I have been to Germany—I must know.' She is quite tired of it.

Also he offends her by being of opinion that: 'London is by far the most immoral place in the world, to his certain knowledge' (he was there for a month once) and when she talks of the domestic happiness enjoyed in England, he shakes his head disputatiously, and bids her 'not to take her ideas of English domestic life from the Signor and the Signora—who were quite exceptions—he never saw anything like *their* way of living together certainly, though he had been to Paris, and been in London, and been in Germany—but the Signor was an angel, and there was the truth of it—yes the Signora was rather an angel too—she never spent two thousand scudi on her dress at once, as *he* had seen women do—so the Signor might well be fond of the Signora—but still for a Signor to be always sitting with his wife in that way, was most extraordinary—and he had been to Paris, and been to London' and so on 'da capo'—So poor Wilson's head goes round, she declares, and she leaves the field of battle from absolute exhaustion.

I quite forgot to speak about *Sharpe's Magazine*. Perhaps Arabel will say for me, if she is asked or has the opportunity, that just now I can't get up the steam for contributions. Don't say the absolute truth—that Robert doesn't like my writing for

magazines—because it sounds too proud, and besides if she (Mrs. J.) wished it, I would really send her something for Sharpe's. He is very proud I tell him : but he maintains that it is taking a wrong position with the public, a thing which he himself never did, except when Hood was dying and wanted help ; and which Tennyson has never done. Blackwood, he says, may be an exception ; but even Blackwood, I see plainly, is a medium rather excepted than acceptable ; and Robert would rather, I am quite certain, that I had nothing to do even with Blackwood. I have not returned my proof yet to Blackwood. Does George understand that the £25 refers only to those fugitive poems I sent some time ago ? Perhaps to the Prometheus also,—but if so, or not, I am by no means sure. At any rate the ‘meditation’ stands in the separate account altogether—therefore I do call it liberal enough.

I wish you would tell me if there is anything in your Wimpole Street shapes and manners, in the way of gowns, mantles, &c., worthy of Florentine imitation. I want to know, (as a matter of curiosity and satisfaction in the abstract), the price in England of that very fine French cambric, of which babies caps are made, because I have heard it sworn to that things are so much cheaper with you than they used to be, that we should not know them again. Not that I believe half ! or what do the taxes mean ? . . .

Dreadful news from Rome ! the world seems quite mad just now ! Poor Rossi—and poor well-meaning Pope !! He was at his prayers, while his faithless flock were pointing the cannons at him.

Dearest Henrietta, tell me everything of yourself and all you care for. I love and pray for you . . . Love to Susan and Surtees. My love is very near to you always. It is fair to say of Father Prout that he has really had two clean pocket-handkerchiefs in the course of our acquaintance. I like him for some things.

As we can't send this to-day, I shall cover this place of address with a few more words. Oh, how tantalizing it is to think of what dear Henry tells about the possibility of seeing him or somebody else here in Florence ! How delighted, more than delighted, I should have been at such a burst of sunshine. We would have found room for them here, and Robert would have made all the lions of the place roar gently for them. And now I suppose, there's no chance—is there ? Too tantalizing it is. . . .

Your own,
BA.

LETTER XX.

The Grand Duke restored by the Austrians—Dislikes Guerrazzi—Mazzini unwise—French intervention awkwardly managed, but with high motives—Fear of general war—Prohibitive cost of visiting England—First accounts of the baby—Entry of thee Austrians—Arabel and homœopathy.

'Pen' Browning (Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning), the poet's only child, was born on March 9, 1849.

The further defeat of Novara (March 1849) when Charles Albert renewed the war, was followed by his abdication and eleven more years of Austrian rule in northern Italy. In Rome followed the appointment of the Triumvirate; Mazzini, virtual dictator, was confronted by a ring of interested Powers, eager to be the first in restoring the Pope to his temporalities: Naples, already at the gate, with Spain and Austria, Catholic powers; and quicker than the rest to transport troops by sea, the French Government, a republic equivocally suppressing a republic, but politically resolved not to let Austria utterly crush Piedmont or dominate Italy as a whole. At the same time France sought to win at home the support of a large Catholic vote, and abroad the prestige of being once more the leading Catholic power, a prestige shaken by the fact that the Pope had sought refuge not with the French, but with King Bomba. Louis Napoleon, former Carbonaro though he was, was not in a position to act otherwise.

Florence, May 2, 3, 4, 5, 1849.

My ever dearest Henrietta—. . . While I write I ought not to forget however what is forced upon us every hour, the aspect of Italy politically speaking; and how we may have to leave it ourselves—how soon is impossible to say. The Austrians are to arrive in Florence to-morrow, and the officers to be quartered on the inhabitants. I am sick at heart, and so is Robert, at the prospect of the country. I, individually, give up the Grand Duke, if it is proved, as it almost seems to be, that he has invited or connived at this Austrian intervention: but weakness of head too often is found to extend to the heart and conscience. What is clearly *ignoble*, is the resumption of his Austrian title coincidently with the Austrian invasion. I give him up now, as Robert did a long time ago. I give him up, having fought for him gallantly. I shed some tears when he went away, and could cry again for rage at his coming back again. 'Put not your trust in Princes.' The patriots, however, are not much better. Guerrazzi betrayed the Duke,

and then betrayed the republic. I never admired that man, the only man of energy in the Tuscan territory. But if the Austrians take him out of the fortress to shoot him, as people say, they ought to shoot half the population besides, for there has been treason everywhere. Robert and I agree that it is melancholy work to live on here. The truth is that poor Italy is distracted. She never will lie down quietly for a continuance under the heel of Austria; and she has not wisdom nor energy enough to stand erect for an hour, neither. Mazzini is the truest hero and patriot she has to boast, and he has not wisdom. He can die for her, but never will cause her to live. That is my view of Mazzini. The French intervention has been awkwardly managed, but the *intention*, tell Arabel, is, in my opinion, noble and upright—nothing else could have saved Rome, with Austria at the doors, and Russia behind Austria. Mazzini's party will perish by the want of wisdom in not receiving the French as friends. The opponents of liberal institutions throughout the world cry out against the French, just as the violent democrats do. The anti-liberals see (being shrewd enough as far as their own interests go) what the extreme party on the other side doesn't see—because that party is apt to see nothing till their head is dashed against the wall. Poor Rome—poor Italy! I should blame as much as any one the inconsequence of the French republic putting down a Roman republic: but this is not the thing intended. Well—it is melancholy altogether. The end may be a concussion between France and Austria and a general war. Italy will perish first, or serve for a battlefield perhaps.

Tell my dearest darling Arabel that what she wrote of our going to England touched us deeply. We thank you both. Wait a little, and let us see. At present, you must feel how the door does not open. I do wish that Florence were nearer London—oh, I wish it! From Paris one might go in fourteen hours for a guinea a-piece, instead of fifteen a-piece. From hence you see, after spending (at the lowest computation) sixty guineas in going and sixty in returning—a hundred and twenty in all—how could we possibly face the expence of a residence for two or three or four months in England? Altogether we must wait and see a little, and we may be driven out of Italy sooner than any of you think. Meanwhile, my disappointment is as great as yours—a very sad and bitter disappointment. Only with so much blessing, it is ungrateful to stand with fixed eyes upon the drawbacks. My thoughts and affections are with you always, believe me. I long too so much to

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While I was writing these last sentences, I heard her calling me
—Wilson was out, and Robert at the Post Office—‘Signora—
signora—ecco i Tedeschi !’ The Austrians had arrived. We ran
out on the terrace together—and up from the end of the street and
close under our windows came the artillery, and baggage-waggons—
the soldiers sitting upon the cannons motionless, like dusty statues.
Slowly the hateful procession filed under our windows. The people
shrank back to let them pass, in the deepest silence—not a word
spoken, scarcely a breath drawn.

show you our child before he grows out of his babyhood. You never saw such a fat, rosy, lively child at two months and a week old—really he is remarkable. Learned nurses here call upon the Blessed Virgin when they look on him. You know the engraving from Raffael’s Virgin and Child which hung in my room, and which used to be criticised about the arms and legs of the infant, as being ‘too fat’—‘too thick,’ said some of your Wimpole Street critics. Baby’s arms and legs perfectly justify the engraving, I assure you. Robert calls him sometimes ‘a little Bacchus,’ he is so rosy and round. . . .

‘O, questo bambino è proprio rabbioso’—the nurse says. Tell Arabel that her insult about my carrying him by his head is quite gratuitous. Nevertheless I acknowledge that he seems to like better being with Robert than with me. Robert nurses him admirably, and the child smiles when he looks in his face. . . . I never told you of our arrangement with the nurse. We pay her every month—besides which she is furnished with her nurse’s costume. Here in Italy, it is generally arranged so. It consists of a large uncut Tuscan straw hat with long blue streamers—gowns trimmed with blue ribbons, (blue is a boy’s colour, pink a girl’s) white collars, smart white aprons, made of muslin, pocket-handkerchief, &c. For the winter she is to have a black beaver hat and black feathers. We like her very much. She is frank and honest, and full of mirth and good humour, and very fond of baby—whom she compliments upon not being at all like an English child.

‘What did she mean by *that*? ’ I asked, not immediately perceiving the compliment.

‘O, c’è qualche cosa di strana !’ in all those English children, but this child is like a true downright Italian ! Wilson and I in our patriotism set up defence and glorification of English children, but she shook her head, there was something unpleasant about them ‘qualche cosa di strana.’

While I was writing these last sentences, I heard her calling me —Wilson was out, and Robert at the Post Office—‘Signora—signora—ecco i Tedeschi !’ The Austrians had arrived. We ran out on the terrace together—and up from the end of the street and close under our windows came the artillery, and baggage-waggons—the soldiers sitting upon the cannons motionless, like dusty statues. Slowly the hateful procession filed under our windows. The people shrank back to let them pass, in the deepest silence—not a word spoken, scarcely a breath drawn.

'Ah, signora,' said our nurse, 'fa male di vedere questo. Sono brutti questi Tedeschi.'

For my part I felt my throat swelling with grief and indignation. Oh, to think of our ever seeing such a sight from these windows. I wish we were a thousand miles away. As to the Grand Duke he is made of the stuff of princes—faithless and ignoble. Robert comes in and tells me that the Austrian General's proclamation is up—'Invited by your Grand Duke——!' So it is confessed at last—the Duke has done it all. Wretched, infamous man. That ever I should have felt compassion for that man! Twelve thousand Austrians in Florence, and more coming. In deep silence and consternation the people see them enter. God bless Italy.

Do write oftener, my dearest Henrietta and Arabel. . . . Tell me of Arabel and the homoeopathy: but she must persevere, or it will all avail nothing. Take care of yourself if you love me. I will tell you of the baptizing—it is not done yet. My dear dearest Henrietta, love your own

B.A.

(*The Volume of Letters from which the 'Cornhill Magazine' has given selections will be published by John Murray in the autumn.*)

LITERARY ACROSTIC.

A LITERARY Acrostic is published every month, and the Editor of THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers two prizes to the most successful solvers. The winners will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. If several solvers send solutions of equal merit, the two whose answers are opened first will win the prizes.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 72.

'The play, I remember, pleased not the million ;
'twas ——— to the ———.'

1. 'A mermaid fair,
Singing alone,
——— her hair
Under the sea.'
2. 'I will ——— on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee.'
3. 'And her ——— the fleetest rush'd
O'er the deadly space between.'
4. 'I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft ——— hangs upon the boughs.'
5. 'In holy ———, and pious grief,
He solemnly cursed that rascally thief !'
6. 'Long live the Lady ———, the chosen and
lawful Queen of Love and of Beauty !'
7. 'You balance an ——— on the end of your nose.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed on

LITERARY ACROSTIC.

page viii of 'Book Notes' in the preliminary pages of this issue; and he must be careful to give also his real name and address.

4. Solvers must on no account write either the quotations or the references on the same paper as their answers. It is not necessary, or even desirable, to send them at all.

5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.

6. Answers to Acrostic No. 72 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50A Albemarle Street, London, W. 1, and must arrive not later than August 20. No answers will be opened before this date.

ANSWER TO NO. 71.		
1. F	ores	T
2. I	nc	H
3. S	cyth	E
4. H	andsa	W
5. E	xampl	E
6. R	ank	S
7. S	carle	T

PROEM : Kingsley, *The Three Fishers*,
LIGHTS :

1. Byron, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*.
2. Cowper, *Truth*.
3. Milton, *L'Allegro*.
4. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ii. 2.
5. Tennyson, *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, viii.
6. Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome. Horatius*, ix.
7. Hood, *Faithless Nelly Gray*.

Acrostic No. 70 ('Cupid Blind') : The prize-winners are Rev. W. A. King King, Leintwardine Vicarage, Salop, and Mr. W. W. How, 21 Merton Street, Oxford. These two solvers will choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue.

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